



TRANS-CAUCASUS

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Officer Block 2 and Enlisted Block 3

# An Introduction to the Trans-Caucasus Region

CENTER FOR ADVANCED OPERATIONAL CULTURE LEARNING

# **Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) Program**

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## Introduction

One must distinguish between the study of regions, countries, and cultures. Chapters 1 through 6 in this document introduce a region and provide some information about its countries and their relationships. They do not introduce a culture or cultures. Those chapters simply provide knowledge about the region and the environment in which people with different cultures live.

Regions and states do not have a single culture; instead they have multiple, diverse cultures. Cultures are not necessarily bound by national borders. There may be multiple cultures in a single state, while people sharing a single culture may live in more than one state.

The case study in Chapter 7 is about one specific culture in the region. Building upon the information provided in chapters 1 through 6, Chapter 7 introduces one of the many cultures in the Trans-Caucasus region, using concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document.

## Why This Region is Relevant to You as a Marine

The Trans-Caucasus region is strategically located between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The region is prone to conflicts and natural disasters that may require quick U.S. response.

The region is an important source and transit point for oil and gas, which were previously owned by the Soviet Union.

The Trans-Caucasus also acts as a geographic and political bulwark against instability in the Middle East and Russia's attempts to regain influence in its former empire.

The U.S. military has extensive ties with Turkey's military, a NATO member.



USMC Gunnery Sgt. Matthew Richey and Georgian soldiers during live-fire exercise as part of Agile Spirit 14 at Vaziani Training Area, Georgia, June 2014 (Source: LCpl Samantha Barajas, Defense Imagery)

Georgia seeks membership in NATO and U.S. Marines provide training to its military. Georgian troops have trained, deployed, and fought alongside U.S. Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan is not seeking membership in NATO, but nevertheless is seeking extensive cooperation with the U.S. military. Armenia is a major Russian ally and does not seek to join NATO. Nevertheless, the country is expanding cooperation with the U.S. military.

U.S. Marines participate in multinational security cooperation missions in the region, including SEABREEZE, AGILE SPIRIT, and Black Sea Rotational Force (BSRF).

## Geographic Overview

### Why a Geographic Overview Matters to You as a Marine

Geographic features include physical and biological factors tied to location, topography, climate, soil, environmental hazards, flora, and fauna. These features influence human and social characteristics such as beliefs, behaviors, social organization, economy, and politics, to name a few. This is not to say that geography determines how people and societies behave, but rather that it has varying effects on what they believe and do.

The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coasts have great influence on where people live, what crops can be raised, and what modes of transportation are suitable. Climate and weather influence how people dress, work, and earn a living. Natural disasters like hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes can devastate a region, and dislocate a great number of people.

### Global Location

Geopolitically a transitional zone between Europe and Southwest Asia, the RCLF-designated Trans-Caucasus region extends from coastal Turkey, across Armenia and Georgia, to the Caspian Sea's shore in Azerbaijan.



Trans-Caucasus Region (Source: CIA)

## Countries

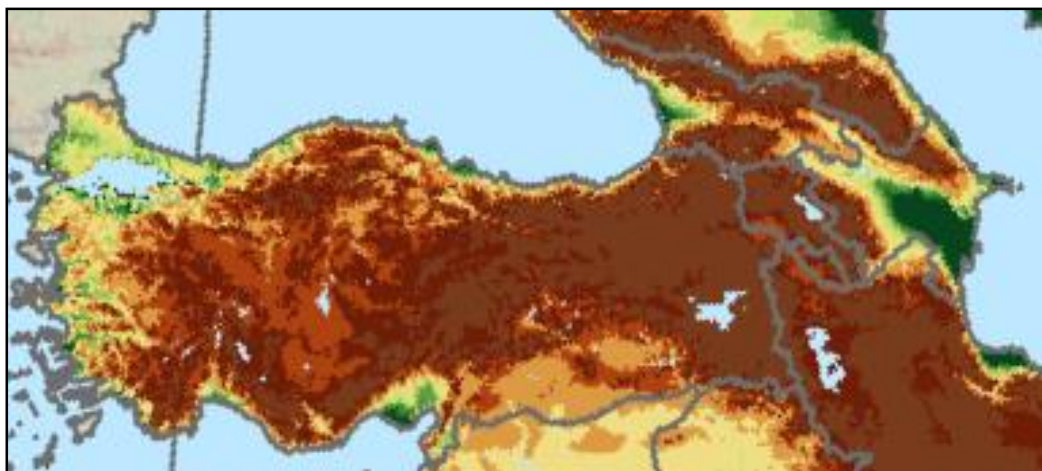
Scholars generally highlight only **Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia** (former Soviet Union republics) as Trans-Caucasus. The RCLF program has added **Turkey** to this category. The capital of Armenia is Yerevan, Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan, Georgia's is Tbilisi, and Ankara is the capital of Turkey.



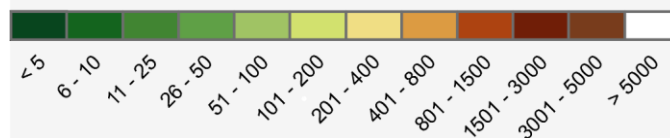
Source: CAOCL

## Topography

Distinctive physical features form much of the region's boundaries. Turkey's Black, Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean Seas' coasts in the west, the Caspian Sea in the east, and the Greater Caucasus—with the highest elevation in Europe—form its northern boundary with Russia. Southern boundaries, with Syria, Iraq and Iran, are less pronounced and stretch across the highlands of southern and eastern Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. A small portion of Turkey's territory extends into Europe, and the region also borders Greece and Bulgaria.



Meters above sea level:



Elevation Map (Source: Earth Institute, Columbia University)



The region includes extremely diverse terrain, with subtropical lowland marshes, forests, mountain ranges, glaciers, a semi-arid plateau, highland steppes, and grasslands. However, most of the region is mountainous, dominated by the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the northeast and the high Anatolian Plateau in Turkey.

The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range extends from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, on an axis oriented west-northwest to east-southeast. The range forms a formidable natural border between Russia to the north and Georgia and Azerbaijan to the south.

The Lesser Caucasus Mountains Range runs parallel to the Greater Caucasus, extending across Georgia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and into Iran. The subtropical lowlands of Georgia and Azerbaijan contrast with the Greater and Lesser Caucasus and allow access from the sea, while leaving Armenia a landlocked country.

About a dozen peaks in Georgia exceed 15,780 feet. By comparison, the 14,504 feet-high Mount Whitney, in California, is the tallest mountain in the continental U.S., not including Alaska.

The region west of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains, bounded by the Black, Aegean, and Mediterranean Seas, is known as Anatolia. From the Aegean coast eastward, Anatolia's elevation gradually increases and the physical landscape and climate change, resembling the conditions in southern California. Access to central Anatolia is more difficult from the Mediterranean Sea (Taurus Mountains) and the Black Sea (Pontus Mountains), where a rapid increase in elevation – with peaks reaching 10,000 ft. – begins along the coast.

Eastern Anatolian highlands' rugged landscapes further increase in elevation. Volcanic activity has modified some of the landscape, which resembles that of Nevada or Utah (Mt. Ararat, the highest point in Turkey, is an active volcano, while Lake Van, the largest in the region, was created as a result of volcanic activity).

**TACTICAL TIP:** Movement in most parts of the region is difficult at high altitude. This will impact the ability of acclimatized Marines to move, work, and fight. Water consumption will be higher and reliance on individual and small unit water purification systems will become necessary to avoid carrying large quantities of water. Different technical difficulty ascent grades may require Marines' different fitness levels, ranging from good basic and cardio-vascular fitness to high degrees of fitness with previous climbing experience in strenuous climbing.

The Turkish Straits, consisting of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, divide Asia from Europe. Located in Turkey, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are respectively 17-miles long and 40-miles long waterways connecting the Black and Aegean seas. One of the world's most difficult waterways to navigate and only half a mile wide at its narrowest point, the straits see an average of 50,000 vessels, including 5,500 oil tankers, passing through annually.



The Turkish Straits (Source: U.S. Department of Energy)



The passage of ships through the Turkish Straits is regulated by a 1936 international treaty, the Montreux Convention. The Convention gives Turkey control of the straits and grants free and unlimited access to civilian vessels under any flag. It also allows Black Sea states to move warships through the Straits with few restrictions. However, the Convention restricts outside navies' access to the Black Sea to 21 straight days per warship, and a maximum tonnage of 45,000 tons, with any one vessel no heavier than 15,000 tons. Non-Black Sea states must also give Turkey a 15-day notice before sending warships through the Straits.<sup>1</sup>

## Topography and Culture

Topography and varied climatic zones of the Trans-Caucasus have impacted cultures in the region and account for some of the variations in them. Ethnic and cultural diversity was preserved by the geographic isolation of the many groups that settled in the region's rugged mountainous terrain.<sup>2</sup>

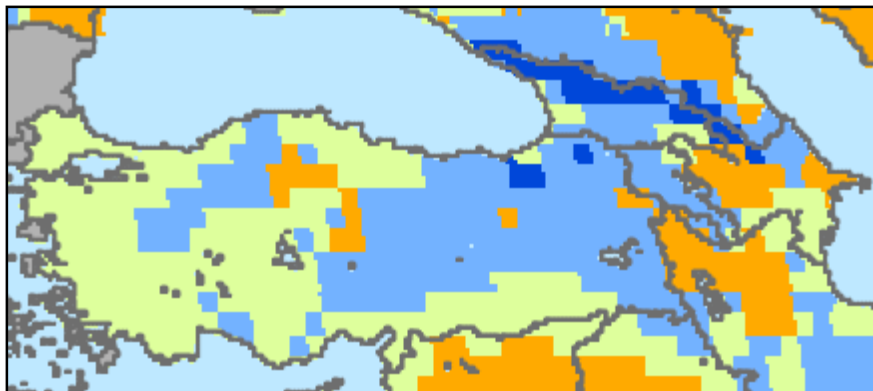
Georgia provides a good example of how topography may account for some cultural variations. Connecting the Greater Caucasus Mountains with the Lesser Caucasus, the Likhi Ridge divides Georgia into two geographically, climatically, and culturally different parts of East and West Georgia. The same Georgian people inhabiting the two parts of the country have markedly different historical experiences, economic activities, and cultures. However, one must keep in mind that topography is but one in many factors that account for variations in culture.

## Rivers and Lakes

With close to 30 river basins and a varied topography, the Trans-Caucasus has over 16 percent of Europe's hydropower potential. At 848 miles, the Kura River is the longest river originating and ending in the region. It runs through Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. The Tigris (1,180 mi) and the Euphrates (1,740 mi) rivers, which have their sources in eastern Turkey, run through Syria and Iraq to the head of the Persian Gulf. Lake Van (1,434 sq miles) in Turkey and Lake Sevan (525 sq miles) in Armenia are the largest lakes in the region.

## Climate and Weather

At sea level, the average annual temperatures are moderate. The coastal areas of Georgia and Turkey bordering the Black Sea have a temperate climate with warm summers and cool to cold winters.



**Generalized Climate Zones:** ■ Tropical ■ Dry/Desert ■ Temperate ■ Cold ■ Polar/Tundra

The coastal areas of Turkey bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea have a temperate climate, with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Conditions can be much harsher in the interior. The Anatolian Plateau in Turkey has a continental climate with cold winters and hot, dry summers.

The area bound by the Greater Caucasus and Lesser Caucasus Ranges varies in climate and weather depending on the elevation. It ranges from the moderate climate in the low lands in Georgia, to the hot summers and cold winters in the flat lands in Azerbaijan, to the harsh, cold winters and cool summers in the mountains.

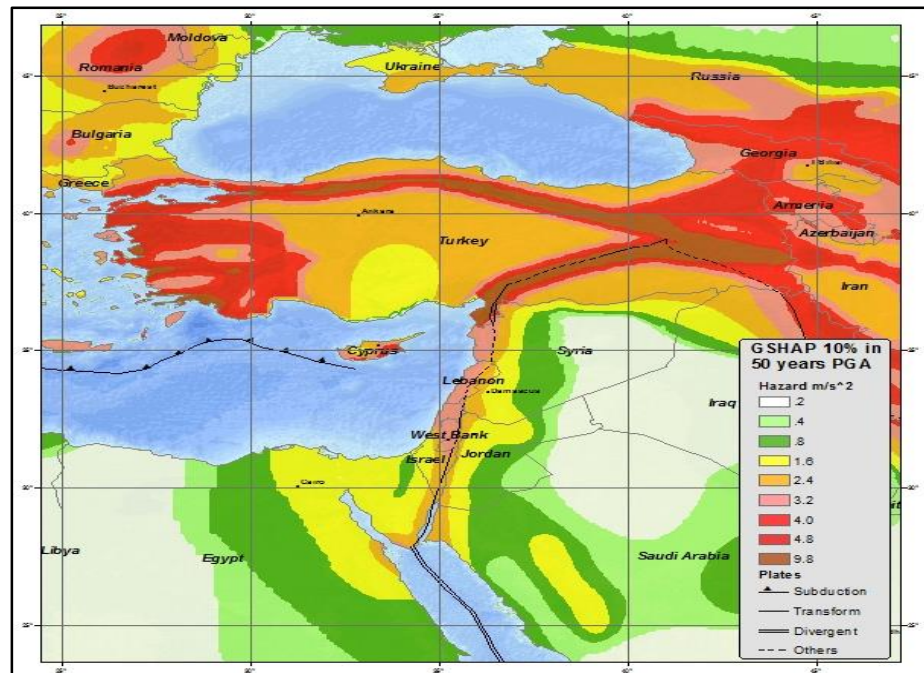
**TACTICAL TIP:** The problems caused by these extremes are an important consideration when operating in the Trans-Caucasus. If food, water, and electricity are not available, it must be planned for logistically. Depending upon the severity and duration of the shortages, HADR efforts may be necessary.

### Precipitation

Precipitation in the Trans-Caucasus region varies widely depending on location and elevation. The coastal areas of Georgia and Turkey bordering the Black Sea receive the greatest amount of precipitation throughout the year. The coastal areas of Turkey bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea have dry summers but wet winters. The Absheron Peninsula in Azerbaijan and the central part of the Anatolian Plateau in Turkey receive the least precipitation in the Trans-Caucasus region. In the mountainous parts of the region, year-round snows are common.

### Environmental Hazards

All four countries of the region are vulnerable to similar natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, wildfires, droughts, landslides, avalanches, strong winds, snowstorms, frost, and hail.<sup>3</sup> Earthquakes are the most dangerous hazard in the region. The region is seismically very active and earthquakes plague all four countries.



Seismic hazard map of the Trans-Caucasus (Source: U.S. Geological Survey)

## Historical Overview

### Why History Matters to You as a Marine

History provides a knowledge of how people, institutions, and states in a region evolved into what they are today. It also provides insights into people's collective memory about their group and others. In other words, history not only shapes a region's current affairs, but also tells us something about the historical roots of the individual and group identities of its inhabitants.

History does not predict how groups, institutions, and states in a region may behave in the future. Instead, it provides insights into what is possible and probable.

### Early History

History in the Trans-Caucasus is kept alive in the forms of myths, stereotypes and prejudices, but not much via objective historiography. Although it plays a major role in their minds, many people tend to have a very narrow and partisan knowledge of the history of their own nation and an even more limited understanding of the history of their neighbors.

Many Armenians consider themselves to be direct descendants of the biblical Noah.

The exact territories and borders of ancient states and settlements are heavily debated, and they are often used as an argument in current conflicts in the Trans-Caucasus.

As a crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa, the region has long been used as a migration route. Trans-Caucasus is one of the most ancient centers of human habitation. Archeological findings suggest human existence dating back to the Old Stone Age, 500,000-10,000 B.C.

The world's oldest completely preserved, 1.8-million-year old, human-like skull was discovered near Dmanisi, Georgia.

Because of its geographic location as a bridge between Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Trans-Caucasus has been the center of numerous civilizations since prehistoric times. For centuries, the region has been a place where rival empires met. Armies have repeatedly invaded to protect or extend those borders.

As waves of people moved across the region, they made it home and mixed with the local populations. Since antiquity the region has been known for its large number of distinct ethnic groups, languages,

and cultures. Greek, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Mongol, Turkic, and Russian presence in the region has left lasting human and cultural legacies.



Map of the Hittite Empire at its greatest extent, 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Source: Wikimedia)

Trans-Caucasus is home to some of the world's oldest civilizations and kingdoms. One of the oldest, the Hittite Empire emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in present day Anatolia and at its height encompassed parts of present day Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> Lasting over five centuries, at one point of history the Hittite battled pharaohs of Egypt for control over the Middle East.

The Hittites were famous for their skills in building and using chariots.

The ancestors of the Armenian and Georgian people appeared in written records between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>5</sup> Ancestors of modern Turkish and Azeri people appeared much later, in A.D. 11<sup>th</sup> century, when Turkic people migrated from Asia to the Trans-Caucasus and mixed with the local population.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. numerous Greek colonies appeared on the shores of the Aegean and Black seas, while from the east, the Persian Empire gradually expanded into Anatolia. The Greeks and the Persians frequently clashed with no clear winner. The stalemate was broken in the 330s B.C. when Alexander the Great decisively defeated the Persians and conquered Anatolia. Alexander expanded his conquest into Asia but his newly established empire disintegrated after his death. Instead, there emerged numerous states of various sizes and duration. Anarchy and war plagued the Trans-Caucasus until it became a part of the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.

The famous Greek author Homer, who wrote the epics *The Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, was born in the Aegean city of Smyrna, today's city of Izmir in Turkey.

The dominance of the Roman Empire (the eastern part of the empire is also known as Byzantine Empire; its capital Constantinople is present day Istanbul, Turkey's largest city) in the region lasted centuries. The population of the Empire in Anatolia was overwhelmingly Christian and Greek-speaking.

## Early States and Empires

Armenia and Georgia claim the origins of their statehood back to various states and tribal unions that emerged in antiquity dating back as early as 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>6</sup> Although occasionally some of the states emerged as large empires, most of the time the predecessors of modern Armenians and Georgians had to survive in a region dominated by more powerful neighbors or were devastated by conquerors



passing through. The exact origin and territories of these early states are heavily debated, because they are used as an argument in current conflicts between the countries in the Trans-Caucasus.



Armenia in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Armenians see the Armenian state as historically a much larger entity than it is today. (Source: Wikipedia)

named after their leader) settled in Anatolia in the A.D. 11<sup>th</sup> century and created a powerful state, while battling the Byzantine Empire. The Seljuk Turks began spreading Islam in the region, transforming the predominantly Greek and Christian presence in Anatolia into predominantly Turkic and Islamic. Arabs initially introduced Islam in present day Azerbaijan in the A.D. 7<sup>th</sup> century and the process was accelerated by the influx of Turkic tribes in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, another Turkic tribe, the Ottoman Turks rose to power and gradually pushed the Byzantine Empire out of the Trans-Caucasus. In 1453, the Turks conquered the capital of the Empire, Constantinople, and later established the city as their own capital. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire emerged as one of the world's greatest empires, ruling over diverse people in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Modern-day Turkey sees itself as the successor to the Ottoman Empire.



Ottoman Empire at its greatest extent, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century (Source: Wikipedia)

The key to the Ottoman Empire's expansion was the successful organization of non-Turkic ethnic groups. Initially, because the Ottoman Turks were a minority group in the rapidly expanding Empire, they had no choice but to rely on assistance from other ethnic groups. For this purpose, the Empire's rulers successfully used Islam to integrate minorities.

Starting in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the present day Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia became a place where the Ottoman Empire, Persia (present-day Iran), and later the emerging Russian Empire clashed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire gradually gained control over the area.

## Emergence of Modern States

As with all empires, the Ottoman Empire began its inevitable decline in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it lost most of its European territories, while the rest of the Empire experienced political, social, and economic crisis. When, in 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War (WWI) on the side of the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Bulgaria), it was already in deep decline. The Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, and others) prevailed and at the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire found itself in control only of Anatolia. The former Ottoman territories in the Middle East were divided between France and Great Britain.

During and immediately after WWI, the Ottoman authorities suspected ethnic Armenians of collaborating with Russia and pushed them out of their historic lands in Eastern Anatolia (what Armenians historically view as Western Armenia). Armenians claim that in the process up to 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives. Millions of Armenians from Anatolia resettled in Armenia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. After the war, Turkey and Soviet Russia signed a treaty, which established the border between the two states and left Western Armenia in Turkey. To this day, the forcible removal of Armenians and the loss of historically Armenian lands continue to complicate Armenian-Turkish relations.

After defeating the Ottomans in WWI and occupying its capital Constantinople, the Allied Powers sought to further dismember the Empire. This prompted a national resistance movement, based in Anatolia and led by a military commander, Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, to wage a war against the occupiers. His forces were successful in expelling the foreign forces and the Turkish Republic was created in 1923. Ataturk did not want to save the multinational character of the former Ottoman Empire. Instead, he envisioned a modern nation-state, a home for ethnic Turks. Therefore, Ataturk had no interest in the former Ottoman possession in Europe and the Middle East where Turks were minorities. Instead the new state encouraged those ethnic Turks to move to Turkey.

Ataturk first came to fame as the Commander of the Ottoman forces during the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915-16. A large Allied expeditionary force launched a massive amphibious attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula with the aim of capturing the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. After months of fighting and many casualties on both sides, Ataturk's forces repelled the attack.

**TACTICAL TIP:** In the early 1930s, the Gallipoli Campaign served as the basis for research on amphibious landings at the U.S. Marine Corps schools. Its lessons were incorporated in the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations, published by the Marine Corps Schools in 1934.

WWI led to the disintegration not only of the Ottoman Empire, but also of the Russian Empire. During the civil war following the collapse, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia declared independence. However, in 1921 the Red Army invaded and the three states were incorporated into the Soviet Union (the successor to the Russian Empire) as constituent Soviet republics.

In 1921 Soviet Russia and Turkey signed a treaty settling the border between the two countries. This treaty effectively ceded what Armenians consider Western Armenia to Turkey, while Eastern Armenia became part of Soviet Russia. Later the same year, Turkey signed treaties with the Soviet republics of

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia confirming the border as agreed between Soviet Russia and Turkey. These treaties marked the final change to state borders in the Trans-Caucasus to date.<sup>7</sup>



Mt Ararat overlooking Yerevan across the Turkish-Armenian border  
(Source: Wikipedia; Photo by Serouj Ourishian)

Mount Ararat (elevation 16,945 ft.) is associated with the mountain on which Noah's Ark came to rest. Ararat is sacred to Armenians, many of whom believe themselves to be the first humans to appear in the world after the Deluge. The 1921 Soviet-Turkish Agreement, however, left the mountain in Turkey. As a result, Ararat, a major symbol of Armenian nationalism, is now clearly visible across the border from Armenia's capital, Yerevan.

The aftermath of WWI also marked the different paths the four countries would follow in the next 70 years. Turkey sought to align itself with Western Europe and the United States, while Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia remained Soviet republics for 70 years, with their political, social, and economic policies defined in Moscow.

Turkey embarked on an ambitious modernization program including instituting elections, giving women the right to vote, separation of religion and state, instituting a modern law system, and changing the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, to name a few. Following the Second World War (WWII), Turkey sought further alignment with the West, becoming an early member of NATO and seeking to join the European Union.

Before and during the WWII, Stalin ordered the deportation of numerous groups from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to Central Asia because of their alleged potential or actual collaboration with Nazi Germany. Hundreds of thousands, including Kurds, Iranians, Greeks, Meskhetian Turks, among others, were deported. Many others died en route due to starvation and disease.

As part of the Soviet Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia also experienced dramatic transformation, witnessing rapid rates of industrialization, infrastructure development, an end to private property, collectivization of farming, almost universal literacy, influx of ethnic Russians and Russification of education and culture. The three countries also witnessed the imprisonment or resettlement of individuals and groups deemed disloyal to the Soviet Union.

## Modern History

In 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated and Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia declared independence. The process was very chaotic and Azerbaijan and Georgia plunged into civil wars and political instability. The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous region in Azerbaijan, sought to join Armenia and after a civil war (1991-1994) declared independence from Azerbaijan. In Georgia, the ethnic minorities in two regions – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – seceded from the state



after civil wars. In 2008, after a three-day war between Russia and Georgia, the two enclaves, with Russian support, declared independence from Georgia.

Turkey, too, experienced violent conflict. In the 1950s and 60s many ethnic Kurds in the country sought recognition and rights for their ethnic group. The best known and most radical of the Kurdish movements, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) launched a guerilla campaign in 1984 for an ethnic homeland in the Kurdish heartland in Southeast Turkey.<sup>8</sup> Since then nearly 30,000 people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have become refugees in the ensuing conflict.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia experienced dramatic political, social, and economic changes. Gaining sovereignty also forced them to chart their own foreign policy courses, which led to realignment in regional politics. Armenia, fearing Turkey and Azerbaijan, maintained a very close relationship with Moscow; Russia in fact keeps military bases in Armenia.

Azerbaijan and Turkey developed a close relationship based on shared language (Turkish and Azeri languages are mutually intelligible). Both countries also share a mistrust of Armenia; following the Armenian takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Turkey severed diplomatic relations with, and imposed a blockade on Armenia. Azerbaijan also attempted to balance relations with Russia and the West, recognizing that it needed both in order to regain Nagorno-Karabakh.

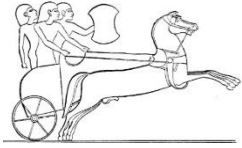
Georgia, after a decade of turmoil and civil war, adopted a very pro-Western foreign policy in the early 2000s, including seeking membership in NATO and a closer relationship with the European Union – moves which inevitably antagonized Russia.

Following its rapid economic growth, Turkey became more assertive in its foreign policy seeking to have an impact regional politics. After decades of seeking closer integration in the West – a course set by the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Ataturk – Turkey became more ambivalent about the West. Starting in the 2000s, Turkey sought to assert itself as a regional power with interests in the Middle East, Russia, and Asia. In the Trans-Caucasus, in addition to Azerbaijan, Turkey also developed a close relationship with Georgia.<sup>9</sup>



Geo-Political map of the Trans-Caucasus after 2008 (Source: Wikimedia)

The turbulent history of the Trans-Caucasus feeds a particular outlook among people in the region that is reinforced by the stories they hear and tell, the national education system, mass media, and the arts. All see their nations as having periods of glorious past, followed by dark periods of subjugation, betrayal, and chaos. The people of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, in particular, see themselves as small nations, frequently falling victims to larger, predatory states. Even Turkey, the largest state in the Trans-Caucasus, has traditionally seen itself as a target of outside powers trying to either dismember it or keep it weak.<sup>10</sup>



Hittite Chariot



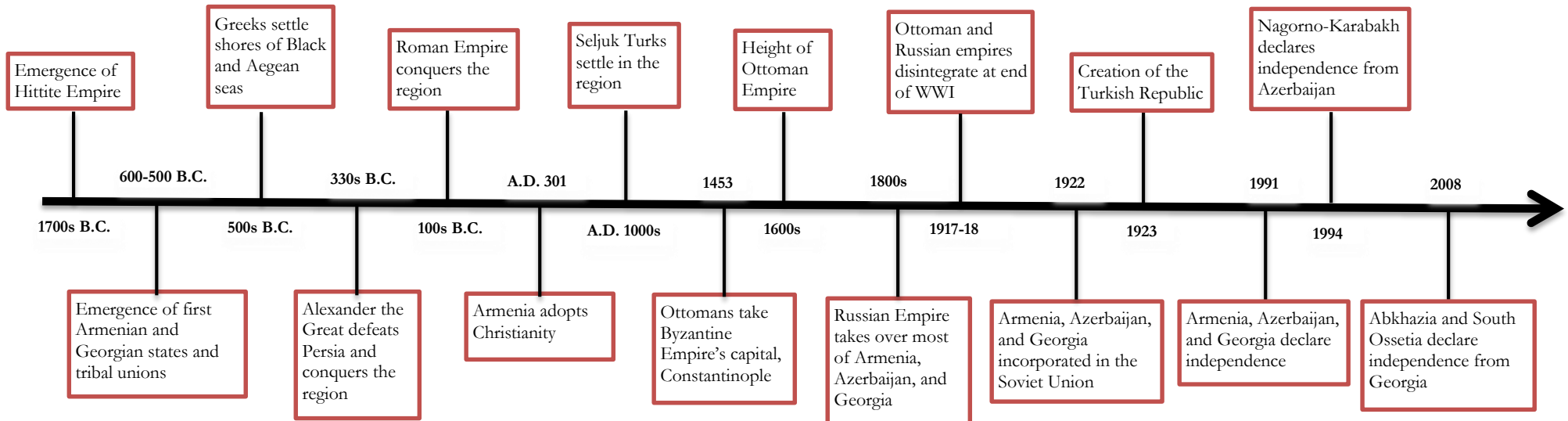
The Gate of Augustus in Ephesus, Turkey



Suleiman the Magnificent, 1530



Kemal Ataturk



Alexander the Great



Etchmiadzin Cathedral in Armenia



Joseph Stalin was born in Georgia



Baku, Azerbaijan

## People and Society

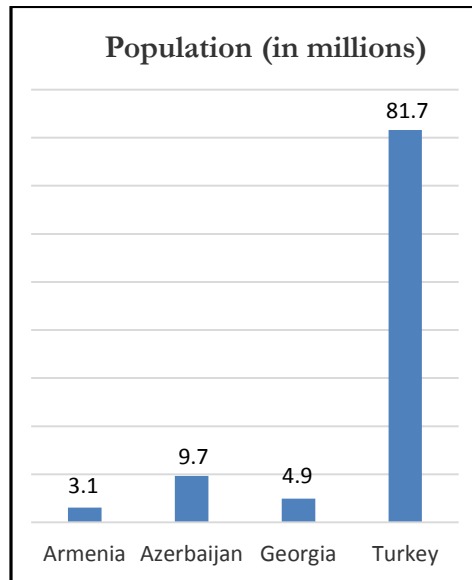
### Why People and Society Matter to You as a Marine

Missions across the range of military operations require Marines to understand, and work with, foreign populations. Knowing the people in the region, including their ethnicities, languages, and religions, as well as the way they live in social entities, enables Marines to create a mental picture of the human dimension of the region.

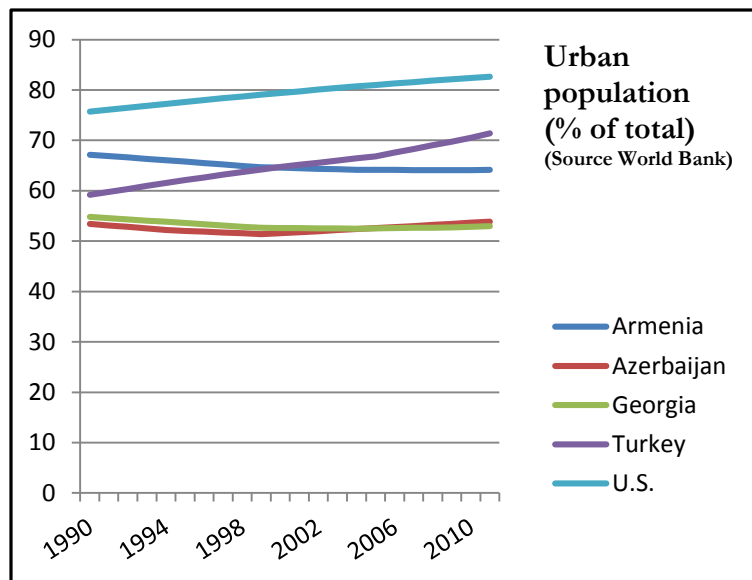
### Population

With over 80 million people, Turkey has by far the largest population in the Trans-Caucasus. Azerbaijan has close to 10 million, third comes Georgia with nearly 5 million, and the least populous state is Armenia with 3 million people.

The majority of people in the region live in urban areas, ranging from 71percent in Turkey, to 64 percent in Armenia, down to approximately 53 percent in Azerbaijan and Georgia.<sup>11</sup>



Source: CIA

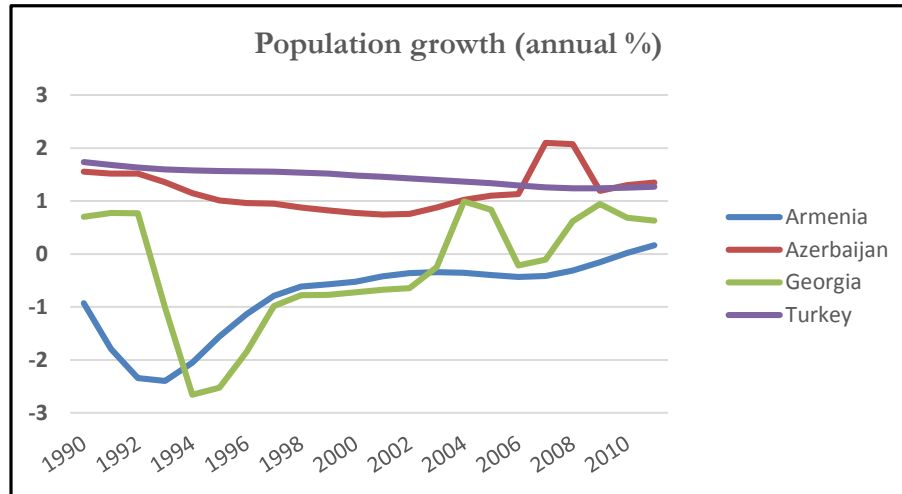


Source: World Bank

The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to major population changes in the Trans-Caucasus, except in Turkey. With the advent of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union into Armenia,

Azerbaijan, and Georgia, many Russians were encouraged to settle in the region to provide the workers and managers for the industries and bureaucracies required by Soviet economic and strategic planners. After the end of the Soviet Union, many ethnic Russians moved to Russia driven by civil wars, worsening economic prospects, and newly instituted discriminatory policies. The same conditions drove hundreds of thousands of ethnic Armenians, Azeris, and Georgians to leave their newly independent countries and seek jobs and better lives abroad, mainly in Russia.<sup>12</sup>

After 1991, civil wars in Georgia and Azerbaijan created hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP) – ethnic Armenians were driven out of Azerbaijan, ethnic Georgians were driven by separatists out of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while ethnic Azeris were driven out of Nagorno-Karabakh. Civil wars and economic declines also forced



Source: World Bank

millions in the post-Soviet states to look for employment outside the region, particularly in Russia, but also in Turkey and Europe. Accordingly, the upheavals affected population growth, particularly in Georgia and Armenia, while in Azerbaijan and Turkey it remained healthy.

## Ethnic Groups

Ethnic Turks, Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris are the majority populations in their respective countries. It ranges from Armenia where 98 percent of the population is ethnic Armenian, to 93 percent Azeris in Azerbaijan, 84 percent Georgians in Georgia, and 70-75 percent Turkish in Turkey. This gives each major ethnic group great power in politics, economics, and culture.

There are a number of other minority ethnic groups spread throughout the region. These groups include Kurds (15-20 percent of the population in Turkey), Russians, Arabs, Assyrians, Abkhazians, Greeks, Jews, Lezgians, Ossetians, Talyshes, Tats, Tatars, Tsakhurs, Ukrainians, Yezidis and Meskhetian Turks.

In addition to being majorities in their own countries, ethnic Armenians, Azeris, Georgians, and Turks are also minorities in neighboring countries. There are Armenian minority communities in Georgia and Azerbaijan, while an ethnic Azeri minority resides in Georgia.



Men from the Yezidi minority in Armenia pray at a graveyard (Source: EurasiaNet)

## Religion

Two main religions dominate the Trans-Caucasus. Ethnic Armenians and Georgians are mostly Christian, while Turks and Azeris are mostly Muslim. 93 percent of people in Armenia adhere to the Armenian Apostolic Church, 84 percent of the population in Georgia is Eastern Orthodox Christian, while people in Azerbaijan and Turkey are respectively 93 percent Shi'a Muslims and 99 percent Sunni Muslims.

Many people in the region believe in a syncretistic blend of two or more religions, mixing Christian Orthodoxy, Islam, and Pagan beliefs and practices.

Religion has a complicated role in the Trans-Caucasus. Until 1991, the former Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia experienced 70 years of rigidly enforced atheism under communist rule. Since gaining independence, people in the three countries renewed their interests in religion. Armenians and Georgians are particularly proud of their Christian heritage and frequently point out that their countries were among the first to adopt Christianity as the official state religion in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Many Muslim women in Turkey celebrate St. George, a Christian saint, by making an annual pilgrimage to Christian churches named after him, and offering up prayers for health and material success.

After years of rigidly enforced secularism, Turkey, a historically Sunni society, is currently witnessing an increased display of Islamic symbols and practices. One of Ataturk's lasting secular traditions was the government ban on women wearing a headscarf in public, political, and educational institutions. However, the ascent of the mildly Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2000s and the changing cultural norms in society gradually challenged this ban. After winning the parliamentary elections in 2002, the AKP's leader and Prime Minister, Recep Erdogan, appeared in official ceremonies with his wife wearing a headscarf, a dramatic challenge to existing laws and norms. Today more and more Turkish women choose to wear a headscarf as a symbol of modesty and religious devotion.



Young people in Istanbul, Turkey taking Iftar, the meal at sundown that signals the end of the daily fast during Ramadan (Source: EurasiaNet)

Despite the increased interest, most people in the Trans-Caucasus still see religion as a cultural trait defining them as part of the nation, rather than as a spiritual trait or a connection between them and God. In other words, religious affiliation, especially in the former Soviet republics, is still nominal. The actual percentage of actively practicing adherents remains relatively low.

## Languages

The official languages in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey are respectively Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Turkish. However, minorities in each country are allowed different degrees of freedom and provisions to use, study, and communicate official business in their own languages. Nevertheless, all minorities complain of language discrimination as official authorities encourage the study and use



of the official languages.<sup>13</sup> Most minorities in the region tend to speak not only their mother tongue but also the country's majority language. However, there are some who do not communicate in the titular language. For example, ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azeris in southern Georgia speak Russian as a second language, rather than Georgian.<sup>14</sup>

After the Russian, and later Soviet, takeover of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, the Moscow-dominated governments required everyone to learn Russian, which became not only the language of official business but also the *lingua franca* of people in the Soviet Union. This process of Russification was especially noticeable in urban areas. Due to many years of Russian and Soviet domination, many in the three post-Soviet states in the region are still able to communicate in Russian. However, the use of Russian among the younger generations is in decline. English is increasingly popular among the younger generations in all four countries.

### **The Interplay Between Ethnicity, Language, and Religion**

Religion, language, and ethnicity in the Trans-Caucasus tend to be aligned. For example, those who consider themselves ethnic Turks tend to identify themselves as Muslims (although not necessarily as practicing) and speak Turkish. Those who consider themselves ethnic Armenians tend to be Christian and speak Armenian, regardless of whether they live in Armenia, Georgia, or Azerbaijan.

### **Informal Social Networks**

Reliance on informal kinship networks and circles of friends and acquaintances in everyday life is a major characteristic of societies in the four countries. These networks are key sources of information, knowledge, and resources in every aspect of life.<sup>15</sup> The networks have strong bonds based on trust. Members of the network go out of their way to reinforce these bonds, spending substantial time and resources in the process.

Soviet rule was one of the reasons for the emergence of informal networks in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Decades of repressive communist rule, in conjunction with constant shortages of goods and services, forced people to develop networks as a way to avoid the watchful eye of the repressive communist regime and to acquire scarce resources.<sup>16</sup> While people in the informal networks develop trust and bonds within the network, they have limited trust in formal institutions and in people outside the networks. Similar networks developed in Turkey, although the country had a different historical experience.

The informal networks are still ubiquitous in all four countries although modernization has partially undermined them. The turbulent post-independence history of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, including civil wars, scarcity of resources, and weak national and state institutions has ensured the survival of the networks. Some of those networks have even expanded as their members monopolized political power after the communist regime's collapse left a power vacuum. In the context of weak state, political, economic, and civil institutions, informal networks have essential functions in the region's societies. They permeate the political, economic, and social systems and facilitate the flow of resources, power, and information. These flows – which may appear to an American as nepotism and cronyism, take place at all levels of public and business life, from low-level bureaucrats to national institutions, to business corporations.

## Family Structure

Societies in the Trans-Caucasus are group-oriented. The family, including the extended family, is the most important group in all four states. It is typically built around one line of the family, usually descending through a male relative. It is common for three generations to live under one roof. Unmarried children tend to live with their parents and a set of grandparents. The family is the most important institution in the region. The honor, name, and image of the family are extremely important and many people in the region attach greater value to the honor of the family than their own lives, or the lives of their relatives.

The extended family includes much more than the American version of brother, sister, mother, father, and grandparents. It includes cousins, many times removed as well.

People rely on the immediate and extended family for emotional and financial support, as well as child- and elder-care assistance. In general, the extended family provides a safety net during hardship. The importance of maintaining these bonds and obligations is taught and encouraged from youth. Family ties also serve as a foundation of social and professional interaction. People expect their kin to show favoritism, to help them out, or to provide assistance.

Traditionally, marriages were arranged by the bride and groom's parents. The bride and the groom also tended to be what Americans would consider underage.<sup>17</sup> Although this tradition is no longer the region's common practice, it still frequently occurs in certain rural areas. All couples must go through a civil ceremony in order to be officially married. Couples usually have a civil ceremony, which typically includes only close family and friends, and the church or mosque ceremony, which is a grander affair. In some areas, wedding celebrations can last more than a day. The families of the newlyweds spare no expenses to offer the wedding guests a memorable feast.

A study by Azerbaijan's authorities found that 37% of married women acknowledged that they had married before the age of 18. Of those who married underage, 63% did so involuntarily; either because of their parents' pressure, financial need, or kidnapping by the groom (6%).



A 16-year-old Roma bride in a Georgian village (Source: Photo by Temo Bardzimashvili; EurasiaNet)

Extended families do not share dwellings, but members are obliged to promptly help any member of family at time of need. This obligation often includes non-relative neighbors, classmates, and fellow soldiers. Therefore, the idea of "acquaintance" is much more significant in the region than in the American society. With this in mind, building relationships with the people in the Trans-Caucasus can help you toward mission success.

## Gender

There are clear male and female roles common in all four countries in the region. The societies are deeply patriarchal, especially in rural areas. Patriarchal attitudes permeate all spheres of life. Custom

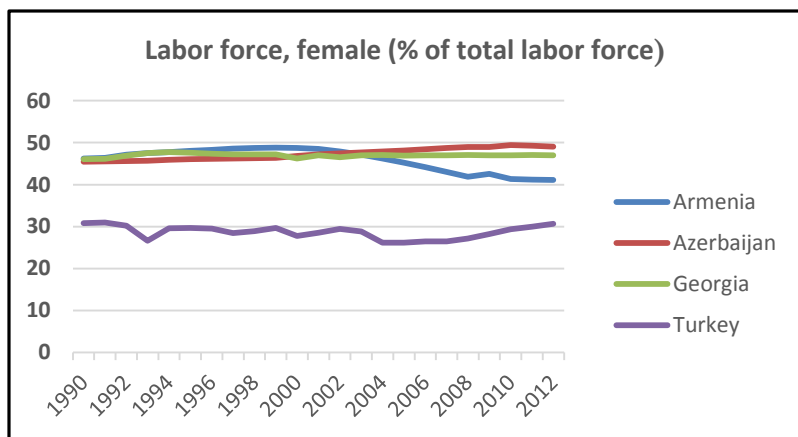


has long cast males as breadwinners, heads of household, and the defenders of familial honor. Females, on the other hand are expected to manage households and tend to children. Women are respected but not as equals.<sup>18</sup> The concept of gender equality in the four countries is not as important as in the United States.

Children of both sexes are given clear guidance on gender norms, and are actively corrected for departing from the norm. Correct displays of appropriate gender roles are regularly encouraged until adulthood.

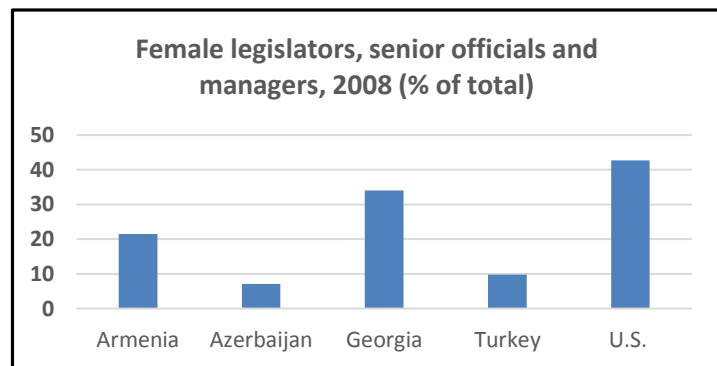
Patriarchal traditions have an influence across the region, particularly in rural areas. In some areas of rural Azerbaijan<sup>19</sup> and Turkey, these can affect a family's decision whether or not to send a daughter to school, whether a woman should be allowed to work outside the home, as well as when and whom she should marry.

Despite the strong patriarchic tradition, women in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia also have a very high participation in the labor force. This is a legacy of Soviet rule, which promoted gender equality in many spheres of life, particularly in employment choices. In Turkey, on the other hand, the percentage of working women is low and marriage tends to be the main reason for their exit from the workforce.<sup>20</sup>



Source: World Bank

In big cities, however, there are wide variations from these norms and traditional gender roles are frequently challenged.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the societies remain rather traditional in observance of gender roles. Consequently, very few women hold prominent positions in politics and business.



Source: World Bank

### Class

In the past, membership in the Communist Party was the main path to high status in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. A selected group of Communist Party leaders and bureaucrats (the so-called *nomenklatura*) had extensive privileges and access to resources. In general, however, the societies were relatively egalitarian – there were no great disparities in wealth. Since gaining independence in 1991, entrepreneurial skills, wealth, and access to power are the new measure of success in the three states. Many members of the former *nomenklatura* used their connections, knowledge, and political power to accumulate wealth. Personal power and prestige rest heavily on either knowing the right people, nepotism, or cronyism.

Like the three post-Soviet states, Turkey has no rigid class stratification. Personal status depends on wealth and access to power. The society provides relatively ample opportunities to move up the social ladder. However, knowing the right people, family connections, and access to political power also play significant roles in social status. The rapid development in the last two decades in Turkey increased social mobility as millions moved to urban centers attracted by job opportunities. However, rapid economic growth has also led to increased social stratification.

There are a number of factors that determine the social class of a person in the region. The most important include the type of post held in government, income, scientific degree and teaching position in university, wealth, occupation, family prestige, value of one’s home, neighborhood, and social reputation (based on either fact or often on rumors).

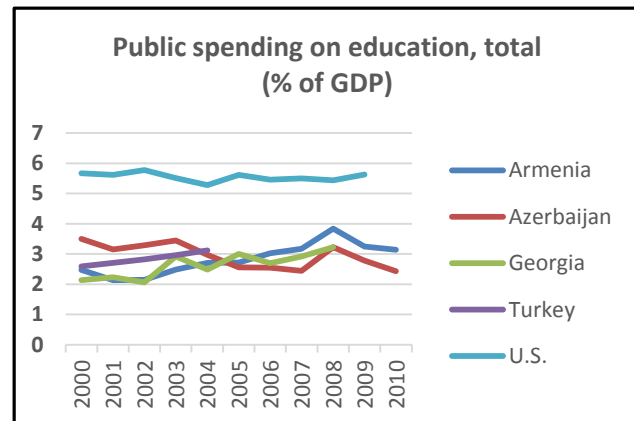
Urban dwellers, especially those in the largest cities, tend to look down on those who either live in rural areas or have recently migrated from the countryside. This plays a major role in the region’s social stratification. The rural populations are generally less exposed to Western cultures and tend to favor traditional notions about lifestyles, behavior, dress, and music.

Ethnicity tends to affect one’s social status. Ethnic majorities in the region tend to see themselves as their respective country’s “hosts,” while the ethnic minorities are seen as “guests.” In the eyes of majorities, hosts and guests are supposed to act accordingly. This attitude inevitably relegates minorities to inferior status in society.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, ethnic minorities see themselves as being discriminated against by the majority in employment, culture, and access to political power. This perceived discrimination is reinforced by the fact that ethnic minorities tend to live in geographic enclaves and further isolate themselves from opportunities available to the majorities.

The armed conflicts following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the PKK’s struggle with the Turkish state were other factors affecting social status in the region. The turmoil created by the conflicts displaced millions, mainly in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Uprooted from their homes, many of these IDPs became dependent on governments for food, shelter, health care, and employment, while living in enclaves, estranged from the rest of society.<sup>23</sup> This was an especially acute problem in Azerbaijan where in 2013 approximately 11 percent of the total population consisted of refugees and IDPs.<sup>24</sup>

## Education

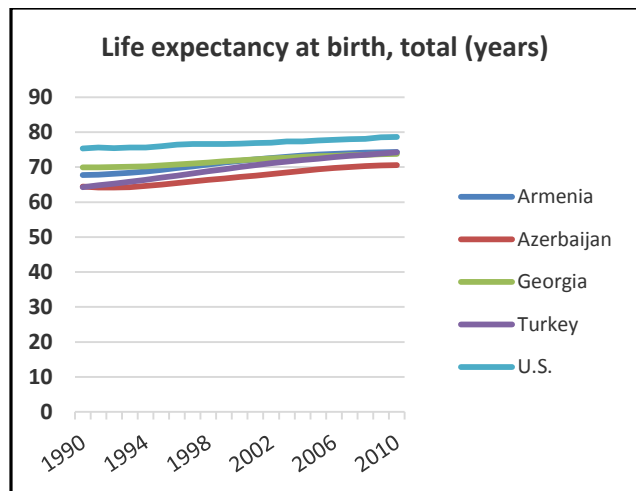
All of the countries in the region have a universal, state-supported education system, and literacy rates are similar to those in the Western world. The education systems are highly centralized and local school districts have limited authority over budgets and curriculum. With the exception of Turkey,<sup>25</sup> all countries also experienced a severe lack of funding in the post-independence period and difficult reforms intended to modernize the education system.



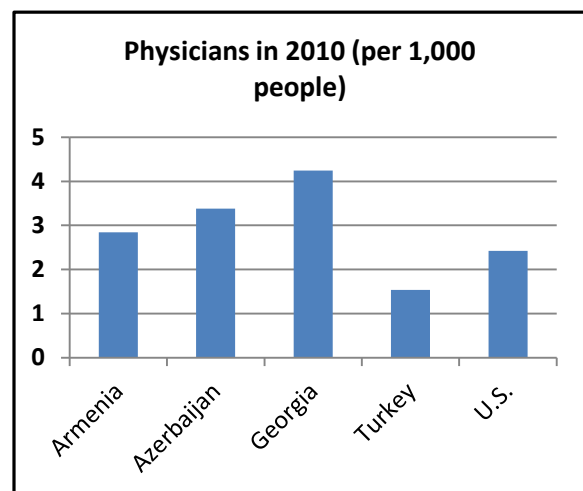
Source: World Bank

## Health Care

Under Soviet rule, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia had a universal healthcare system, which although not of high quality, provided medical services to all citizens. After independence, the three states experienced deterioration of health services in the 1990s due to declining health expenditures, economic crises, and armed conflicts. At the same time, the states embarked on slow healthcare reforms while allocating relatively limited funding to support the system. Currently the healthcare system retains many features of the Soviet system including centralized control, and high numbers of physicians and hospital beds. However, people in the three states are increasingly paying for many health services out of pocket.<sup>26</sup> Generally speaking, the health care system stabilized in the 2000s; accordingly, life expectancy, after stagnating in the 1990s, increased steadily.



Source: World Bank



Source: World Bank

Turkey, too, witnessed substantial improvement in its citizens' health status due to growing prosperity and successful health reform aimed at improving the governance, efficiency, and quality of health care.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, life expectancy consistently increased. However, Turkey still has a low ratio of physicians per population.

## Values, Norms, and Beliefs

Throughout the Trans-Caucasus, norms of behavior, deeply rooted in folk traditions, form the core of societies. Despite some variations, which stem from regional and ethnic/religious differences, the people in each state generally cherish similar norms, customs and traditions.

Peoples' personal commitments and affiliations are influenced by their place of origin and ethnic or religious kinship. People tend to trust more people who share kinship, place of birth, ethnicity, and religion. They also tend to spend considerable efforts and time to develop long-term personal relationships.

Cultures in the Trans-Caucasus are generally group-oriented. Having a sense of belonging to a group, conforming to its norms, and maintaining harmony among its members are more important than asserting individual preferences.<sup>28</sup>

People of the region tend to be very proud of who they are and easily take offense at perceived slights directed at them or their group. People also demonstrate deep respect for elders. In some rural areas in Turkey and Azerbaijan people can go to extremes to defend their personal and family honor. Having a child out of wedlock, extramarital affairs, dating without parental supervision can lead to honor killing, usually committed by a family member.<sup>29</sup>

Development, urbanization, and education are increasingly weakening the strength of traditional values, norms, and beliefs in the Trans-Caucasus, and in the process creating new ones. Rapid modernization in Turkey<sup>30</sup> and the end of communism in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have increased the rate of change.



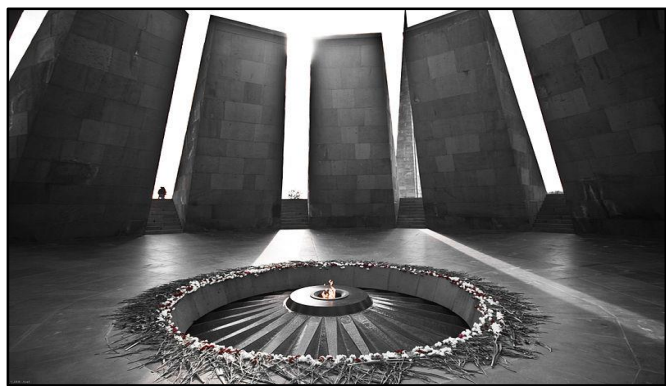
People on the street in Istanbul, Turkey (Source: CAOCL)

Accordingly, there are increasing variations in cultures. In big cities, for example, kinship, regional, religious, and ethnic ties do not necessarily form the basis of personal and professional trust and commitment. The transition from communism to free-market economies in the post-Soviet republics profoundly impacted family life. Although extended families were once the norm, today more and more households are nuclear and many families choose to have a single child. In addition, facing deteriorating economic conditions, hundreds of thousands of Armenians, Azeris, and Georgians emigrated in search of seasonal or permanent employment. This migration strained traditional family ties as many women had to take on the responsibility of running households in these still patriarchic societies. In addition, the decline in the quality and extent of public services provided by the state strained family budgets in the provision of child, elder, and health care.

## The Use of Symbols

The people and states in the region extensively use symbols, especially historical symbols, to communicate what they value.

One example of the importance of symbols is the way Armenians use memories and commemorations of events that took place a century ago to communicate beliefs about Armenian identity and the history of Armenians. During and immediately after WWI, the Ottoman authorities pushed ethnic Armenians out of their historic lands in Eastern Anatolia. Armenians claim that in the process, up to 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives. Armenians consider these events genocide and a central element of Armenian identity. To them, denying that the genocide took place – and many Turks deny it – is a direct challenge to what it means to be an Armenian. Every year on April 24<sup>th</sup>, Armenians all over the world commemorate the events. Armenia also urges other



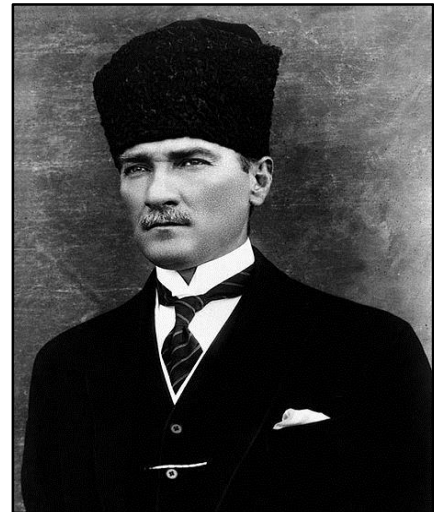
The Armenian Genocide Monument in Yerevan, Armenia (Source: Wikimedia)

states to recognize and commemorate the events. Turkey, on the other hand, resents attempts to call the events a genocide. While Turkey recognizes that many Armenians fell victims to violence, it argues that the events were part of the war, and that it was not only Armenians who fell victims to the violence which engulfed the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

The struggle between Armenia and Turkey to define the meaning of these historical events takes place not only in the region but also in countries where ethnic Armenians live. The United States is home to a large, affluent, and politically active Armenian diaspora which has long insisted that the U.S. recognize the genocide. Although the official U.S. stance on this issue is not to refer to these historical events as a genocide, many American politicians support this cause and actively champion an official recognition.

People in the region can develop cult-like reverence to individuals. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk not only led the Turks in their resistance to the Allied powers' attempts to dismember Turkey after WWI, but also modernized the Turkish Republic by imposing a republican form of government and promoting secularism and development. After his death, he became a symbol of modern Turkey. Often the defense of democracy, secularism, and modernity in the country are presented as a defense of Ataturk's legacy. Even today, his monuments and portraits are ubiquitous in Turkey.

When, in 2013, many Turks joined mass demonstrations to protest the policies of the Islamic governing party, portraits of Ataturk were ubiquitous.



Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, October 1923  
(Source: Wikimedia)

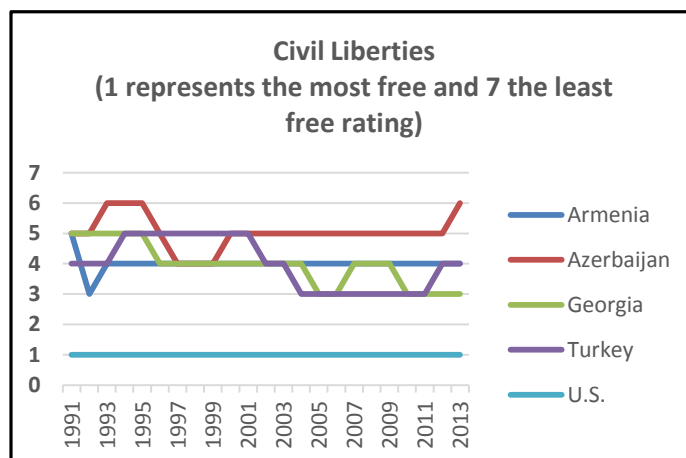
## Government and Politics

### Why Government and Politics Matter to You as a Marine

Most people live in states governed by formal and informal institutions. Marines need to know how power and authority are distributed in the state by studying the formal and informal structures of governments in the region. In addition, Marines need to understand how people, groups, and institutions exercise power and authority, in other words, what comprises politics in the states.

### Political Order

All four countries in the Trans-Caucasus are secular, constitutional republics, in which political power is shared among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. However, how political power is divided varies from state to state. In Azerbaijan, for example, the president, as the head of the executive branch, is the most powerful figure, dominating the work of the council of ministers, the parliament, and the courts. At the other extreme, in Turkey, the parliament has traditionally been the center of power, while the president and the courts have relatively weaker powers. The division of powers among the branches of government in Georgia and Armenia tend to fall between the Turkish and Azerbaijani models.



Source: Freedom House

The constitutions of the four countries accord the citizens certain civil and political rights and freedoms which on paper define the political systems as democratic. However, the level of democratization in the region varies. In 2014, Freedom House, an independent organization producing its annual survey on the state of freedom around the world, classified Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey as partly free, while Azerbaijan was classified as not free.<sup>31</sup> One of the reasons for this difference is the distribution of power in the political system – political power is heavily concentrated in

the presidency in Azerbaijan, while power in the other three countries tends to be distributed among the three branches of government.



After gaining independence in 1991, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia briefly experimented with democracy. However, mismanagement and conflict as well as a lack of democratic institutions and democratic culture brought down the first democratically elected leaders and allowed for the restoration of semi-authoritarian rule under former Soviet leaders, particularly in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Those leaders came to power on the promise to restore order and security. In the view of the populace, democracy took a back seat to restoring order and delivering basic services to citizens.

The political systems in the Trans-Caucasus operate on the basis of consensus among elite groups that control economic and political resources. Societies have relatively little leverage over government; civil societies are weak and people rarely self-organize for political action. As a result, citizens have little trust in political and state institutions. Turkey is somewhat of an exception – the country has a long history of organized civic, political, and labor movements. However, Turkish authorities also have a long history of violent suppression of such organized protests.

Populations in the region are most politically mobilized during elections, but there are only limited attempts to influence politics between elections. Usually, it is economic hardship that prompts people to organize and protest the policies of governments. Again, Turkey is somewhat an exception. Most recently, many Turks became politically mobilized between elections over numerous non-economic issues.<sup>32</sup>

Results of national elections in Armenia and Georgia are usually challenged by the opposition as ruling parties tend to use their position to engage in ballot fraud. Azerbaijan is the exception, as the political system is tightly controlled by the president and the state does not hesitate to use force against the opposition or any public dissent.

### **Informal Power**

The region has a long tradition of informal power centers. Chaos in the early 1990s in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia gave rise to alternative sources of power including paramilitary forces as well as clan, kinship and regionally based networks which had their roots in Soviet times. These networks became alternative powerbrokers, which the weak central authorities were unable to ignore or control. These networks exercised not only political power, but also economic power by gaining control over previously state-owned assets. Although in the late 1990s and early 2000s the three states were able to strengthen their central authority and power, including through disbanding paramilitary forces, the influence of these networks remains strong in the three post-Soviet states.<sup>33</sup>

Turkey, too, has a long tradition of alternative centers of power, which have operated without transparency and public accountability. Above all, Turkey's armed forces have acted as the self-appointed guardian of the secular republic since its establishment in 1923. Starting in 1960, the military conducted coups d'état almost every decade (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997), removing governments which it deemed a threat to constitutional order, political stability, or the secular nature of the state and society.<sup>34</sup> However, starting in the early 2000s, the government led by the Justice and Development Party (known by the Turkish acronym AKP) gradually pushed the armed forces out of politics through constitutional amendments and mass prosecutions of active and retired military officers. Although the military still remains influential in politics, its ability to determine the political order in the country has been severely and systematically undermined.



## **Armenia**

Unlike Azerbaijan and Georgia, Armenia has avoided long periods of strife since gaining independence in 1991. However, this did not facilitate the creation of a stable and democratic political system in the country. From very early on, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh has been central in Armenian politics; in 1998 the country's president since independence, Levon Ter Petrosyan, was forced to resign after mass protests of what was perceived as his very gradual approach to resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. Robert Kocharian, who had been appointed by Prime Minister by Petrosyan, was then elected president and served until 2008, when an ally of his, Serzh Sarkisyan was elected president.

Although there were multiple political parties competing for power, all elections since 1991 have not been free and fair – those in power tended to intimidate the opposition, curtail press freedoms, and engage in election fraud. All election results, including for president, parliament, and local government, were protested by the opposition which cited electoral fraud and intimidation. Only in 2012 was the election for parliament deemed to have met minimal international fairness standards.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Armenia is still considered to be a partially free political system. The presidency is the most powerful branch of government, while the other branches provide limited checks and balances.

## **Azerbaijan**

Since gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has been an authoritarian state, except for a short period in the early 1990s when the country held relatively free and competitive elections and citizens were free to dissent and to self-organize without fear of political prosecution. However, in this early period, the country also witnessed the violent conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, military coups, and political chaos. In 1993 Heydar Aliyev, a former high-ranking communist official in the Soviet Union, became president and gradually accumulated power in the presidency. After his death in 2003, his son, Ilham, assumed the presidency and continued to accumulate power while suppressing political dissent and limiting the citizens' civil and political freedoms and rights. Of the four countries in the region, Azerbaijan emerged as the most oppressive and undemocratic state. Despite the formal division of powers, for all intents and purposes, the country is ruled by one man and his political and economic network.

The country holds regular elections, but none of them are free and fair as the political opposition, although able to stage occasional protests, is suppressed and media is tightly controlled. For example, in the 2013 presidential elections Ilham Aliyev won a landslide reelection victory with 85 percent of vote, but international observers argued that the election fell far short of democratic standards – authorities banned potential candidates from running, media coverage during the campaign was tightly controlled, there were multiple reports of ballot irregularities, etc.<sup>36</sup>

## **Georgia**

Like Azerbaijan, Georgia initially experienced civil wars, political turmoil, and very weak state authority following independence in 1991. Although initially holding democratic elections the country quickly turned into an authoritarian state in which former communists and well-connected figures dominated the country and suppressed opposition. The Soviet Union's last foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, an ethnic Georgian, took power in 1992 after a coup deposed the previous president. He ruled the country until 2003, when a mostly peaceful mass movement removed him from power after he tried to falsify the result of the parliamentary elections. For the next 10 years the country was ruled by

Mikheil Saakashvili and his political party. In 2012 his political party lost the parliamentary elections and the next year Saakashvili himself left the presidency after completing two terms in office. Thus, in 2012-13 Georgia witnessed the first peaceful transfer of power from one political force to another. Unlike Azerbaijan, Georgia has a more democratic system, in which the president has more limited powers, and the parliament and the courts are capable of serving as checks and balances. In addition, there are multiple political parties competing in relatively free and fair elections. Nevertheless, Georgia is not a consolidated democracy as corruption is pervasive, the political elite frequently attempt to intimidate the opposition, and media freedoms are not respected.<sup>37</sup>

## Turkey

Unlike the other three countries, Turkey has had a more gradual political transformation, starting with the establishment of a republican government in 1923. This constitutional and political order established by the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Ataturk, included instituting separation of power, holding regular elections, giving women the right to vote, separating state from religion, and social and economic modernization. These policies transformed the country from an autocratic empire into a nation-state. However, for a very long time, Turkey remained politically unstable and relatively underdeveloped by European standards. Although the country joined NATO in 1952 and later sought to become a member of the European Community (later transformed into the European Union) it remained unstable, which prompted the military to intervene and restore stability several times.

Starting in the 1990s and especially in the 2000s, political and economic reforms finally propelled the country into fast economic growth and political stability. Starting in 2002, the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP), a mildly Islamic party led by Recep Erdogan, won three consecutive parliamentary elections and presided over an unprecedented economic expansion. In addition to steering the rapid economic development, the AKP used its big parliamentary majorities to push social and political reforms. The government improved social services in areas like health and education, oversaw numerous public works projects and several mega-infrastructure projects (including a tunnel under the Bosphorus Strait connecting the European part of the country with Anatolia), and brought development to previously neglected parts of the country, particularly in eastern Anatolia. Politically, Erdogan severely limited the role of the military in political and public life, and effectively recognized the Kurdish minority in the country by introducing policies aimed at maintaining their distinct cultural identity.

Although Erdogan introduced many positive policies and reforms, he also began to concentrate power in his office and increasingly equated any public opposition to his policies with attacks against the entire state.<sup>38</sup> Erdogan also further undermined the power and independence of the judicial branch of government; when prosecutors arrested scores of public officials and businessmen close to AKP on charges of high-level corruption, the government purged hundreds of police officers, prosecutors and judges leading the investigation, effectively bringing it to an end.<sup>39</sup>

The ruling AKP won a third term in office in the parliamentary elections held in 2011. Prime Minister Recep Erdogan became the only Turkish prime minister to win three consecutive parliamentary elections. Erdogan became an even more dominant figure in Turkish politics when he won the presidential elections in 2014.

## Economic Overview

### Why Economy and Infrastructure Matter to You as a Marine

The goods and services that people exchange, the infrastructure that people use to move them, and the formal and informal structures that make exchange possible all play critical roles in survival. A thorough understanding of a region is impossible without knowledge of its economy because the region's political, social, and cultural trends both reflect and shape economic developments and trends.

### Economic Transition

All four countries have been experiencing significant economic changes since the early 1990s.

#### *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*

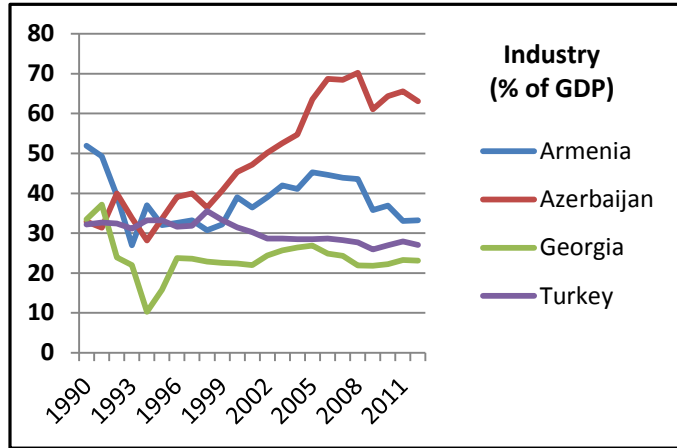
For 70 years, until 1991, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were part of the Soviet economy – a centrally-planned market system in which state-owned industries relied heavily on Moscow for direction and subsidies. Private property did not exist and the state did not allow free enterprise activities.

Before the establishment of Soviet rule the economies in the region were underdeveloped. One exception was Azerbaijan where oil discoveries spurred the development of a nascent industrial base, particularly oil drilling and refining. In 1901, for example, Azerbaijan produced more than half of the world's oil.<sup>40</sup>

Early on, Soviet rule in the three states introduced a modern industrial sector, supplying machine tools, chemical products, textiles, and other manufactured goods as well as power generation facilities.<sup>41</sup> Agriculture, traditionally the most developed sector of the economy, expanded further. However, the planned economy was inefficient and inadequate to meet the demands of consumers. Cumbersome bureaucracy, corruption, and ignorance of market mechanisms further reduced the effectiveness of the economy. In addition, state owned companies provided not only employment but also a wide range of social services including housing, healthcare, education, and recreational facilities, which undermined economic efficiency.

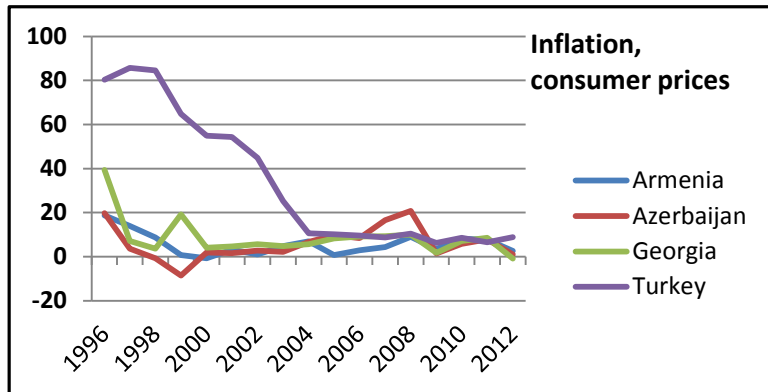
By the 1980s, the economies of the three countries were in decline. Thus, at the end of Communism in 1991, the newly independent states inherited decrepit industrial bases, surviving on state subsidies.

Most industrial enterprises in the region were incapable of competing on the international market. In addition, the three countries suffered the consequences of civil wars including disrupted economies, massive refugee movements, blockaded borders, and destruction of infrastructure. As a result, some industries went out of business completely, while production collapsed, inflation skyrocketed, and standards of living declined. In 1995, economic production in Georgia, for example, was at 30 percent of its 1989 levels, while Armenia registered the steepest single-year decline in 1992 with the Nagorno-Karabakh war and the closure of the Azerbaijani and Turkish borders, which isolated the country.<sup>42</sup>



Source: World Bank

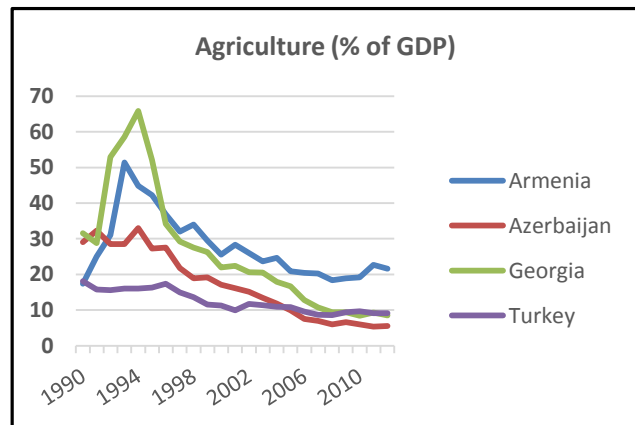
By 2000, only Azerbaijan had been able to meet 50 percent of its production level of 1989. Inflation and poverty increased dramatically. At the same time, there was a return to agriculture, particularly in Armenia and Georgia.<sup>43</sup> Even today, agriculture remains one of the major economic sectors in the region.



Source: World Bank

Although the new political elites were slow and unwilling to implement deep changes after 1991, the three states managed to introduce some market reforms, including privatization of land and industries. However, the main beneficiaries of this process, especially in the industrial sector, were the elites close to those in power. A common feature of privatization was corruption, patronage, and lack of transparency.<sup>44</sup>

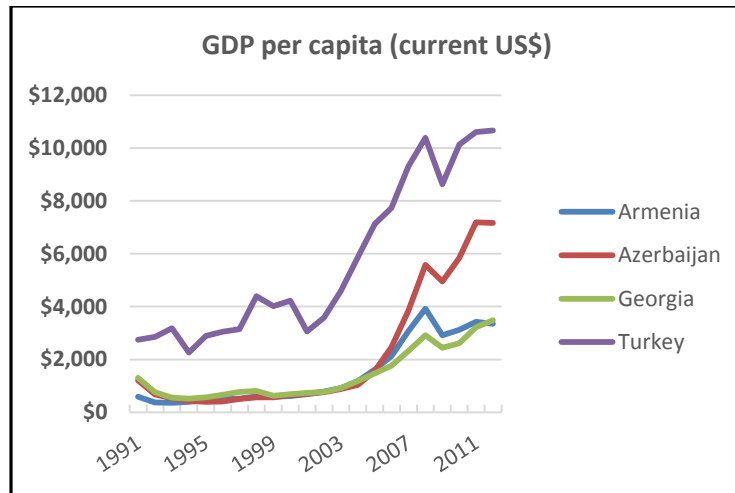
Since 1991 the three post-Soviet countries have experienced uneven economic growth, high unemployment (which forces many to look for jobs abroad), and high inflation. Nevertheless, the three countries were able to stabilize their economies by strengthening state institutions, introducing new tax codes, making it easier to do business, and attracting foreign investments. In addition, economic development also enabled states to decrease the numbers of people living in poverty and to expand previously neglected and underfunded social programs.



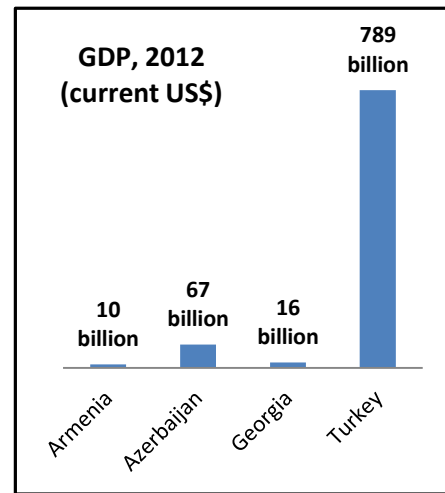
Source: World Bank

Azerbaijan is somewhat of an exception in the region – the country has large deposits of oil and gas and energy exports have propelled its GDP into rapid growth since the late 1990s, often in the double digits annually. Nevertheless, the economy remains vulnerable as it is heavily dependent on energy exports.

Despite the introduction of some free-market policies, the economies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are hampered by weak rule of law, corruption, political interference, monopolies, and the political elites’ unwillingness to reform. Individuals’ economic success often depends on being close to those in power; nepotism and patronage are rife.



Source: World Bank



Source: World Banks

## Turkey

Turkey not only has the largest economy in the Trans-Caucasus, but also a distinct economic background and path compared to the other three countries. Until the late 1990s it struggled with burdensome regulations, state monopolies, weak rule of law, corruption, and high inflation.

However, political stability and reforms introduced in the 1980s began to yield results – by the early 2000s Turkey’s economy began to grow rapidly and soon the country emerged as a regional economic powerhouse. While in 2000 Turkey’s GDP per capita was \$3,576, in 2012 it reached \$10,666.<sup>45</sup> The same year, Turkey was assessed as the 18<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world.<sup>46</sup>

The Turkish economic boom was fueled by the rise of socially conservative, market-embracing business elites in Anatolia. The new elites, leading mostly family-owned small- and medium-size companies, were pious Muslims who used their social networks to forge business networks.<sup>47</sup>

Now Turkey has a largely free-market economy increasingly driven by its industry and service sectors, although its traditional agriculture sector still accounts for about 25 percent of employment.

## Informal Economy

The informal economy includes those economic interactions and exchanges that are not recognized, regulated, controlled, or taxed by a state government.<sup>48</sup>

All four countries have significant informal economies. Turkey's informal economy in the 2000s was around 30 percent of all economic activities,<sup>49</sup> while in Georgia it reached over 50 percent and as high as over 60 percent in Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>50</sup> The informal economy allows employers, employees, and the self-employed to increase their take-home earnings. On the other hand, it entails a loss of budget revenues for governments. Those involved in the informal economy also lack work stability and social security.

In addition to the legal business activities and exchanges taking place in the informal economy there are also widespread criminal activities in the four countries including drugs, smuggling, gambling, prostitution, human trafficking, etc.

The informal economies in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia used to be much larger immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union due to civil wars and the lack of functioning state institutions in the newly independent states. In general, civil strife, economic crises, corruption, certain cultural traditions, and dysfunctional state institutions tend to favor the growth and persistence of the informal economy. However, in the last decade, the relative political stability in the four countries enabled the states to limit the size of their informal economies.

The economies of the Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia remain weak and highly vulnerable to even small domestic and foreign shocks. For example, the short war between Georgia and Russia in 2008 had significant negative economic consequences not only for Georgia, but also Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>51</sup> Although vulnerable to external and internal shocks, the Turkish economy is much more resilient to challenges, mainly because of its large size and diversification.<sup>52</sup>

## **Infrastructure**

As the bridge between Asia and Europe, the Trans-Caucasus is strategic in terms of transport and communication. However, the region still faces the legacies of the Cold War, which isolated Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia from Turkey and the rest of the world. The road and railroad infrastructure in the three republics, for example, was developed with an eye on supporting Soviet military efforts in the region, rather than transporting goods. The mountainous terrain further complicates the construction and maintenance of transportation networks. Accordingly, the infrastructure to support the interaction of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia with other regions is yet to be fully built.

Unlike the other three countries, Turkey has been open to the world for a longer period of time and accordingly, has a better developed infrastructure to support the resulting interaction. Turkey also has more financial resources, and the country's rapid economic growth was accompanied by the development of its infrastructure.

## **Energy Corridors**

One of the reasons for the Trans-Caucasus' growing strategic importance is energy. Of the four countries, only Azerbaijan has significant oil and gas reserves.<sup>53</sup> However, the Trans-Caucasus is located between oil and gas producing countries, including Russia, and states in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, and energy consuming countries in Europe; three-quarters of the world's proven oil and gas reserves are located in the Trans-Caucasus' neighborhood. As a result, the region aims to become a major energy transportation hub.

Armenia is an exception in the region. It has no fossil fuels reserves (it imports 100 percent of its oil and natural gas needs) and because of the country's conflict with Azerbaijan and strained relations with Turkey, it is excluded from the regional oil and gas transportation system. Armenia is also the only country in the region to operate a nuclear power plant, Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant. Constructed in the 1970s and located 30 km from Yerevan and just several kilometers from the Turkish border, the plant operates a nuclear reactor built without containment structures. The plant is located on some of the Earth's most earthquake-prone terrain. The combination of location and the reactor's design make the facility a danger to the entire region.<sup>54</sup> Plans to replace the plant with a new one are under way. Meanwhile Armenia has little choice but to operate the old reactor, which provides more than 40 percent of the country's electricity needs.

In the last few decades the region has witnessed a major development in its energy transportation system. In addition to domestic oil and gas pipelines, the region is host to a number of international pipelines, which were built in the last two decades. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (BTC) transports crude oil from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan via Georgia to the Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, the longest pipeline in the region. The largest pipeline (by capacity) in the region carries crude oil from Kirkuk, Iraq to Ceyhan, Turkey. The crude is then shipped via tankers from Ceyhan to European markets. The Baku-Supsa pipeline carries crude oil from Baku, Azerbaijan to the port of Supsa in Georgia. In addition, significant volumes of crude oil from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan are moved by tankers via the Turkish Straits to Western markets.<sup>55</sup>





Primary gas and oil pipelines to Europe (Source: U.S. Department of Energy)

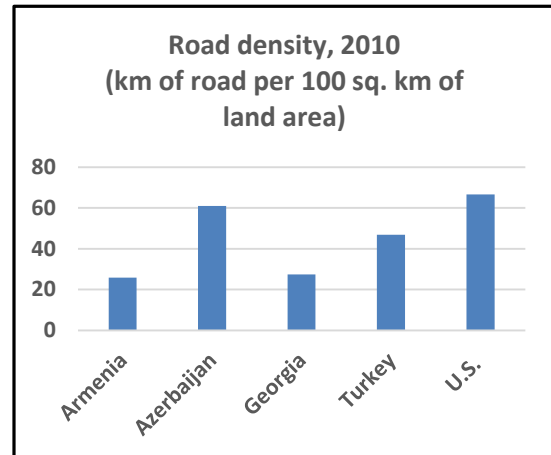
There are three main natural gas pipelines that cross the region. The South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) runs parallel to the BTC oil pipeline, but terminates in Erzurum, Turkey; the Blue Stream pipeline crosses the Black Sea underwater, delivering natural gas from Russia to Turkey; the Gazi-Magomed-Mozdok Pipeline transports natural gas from Azerbaijan to Russia.

In response to growing energy needs and in attempt to diversify the sources of energy, there are plans for the construction of additional oil and gas pipelines in the region.<sup>56</sup>

## Roads and Railroads

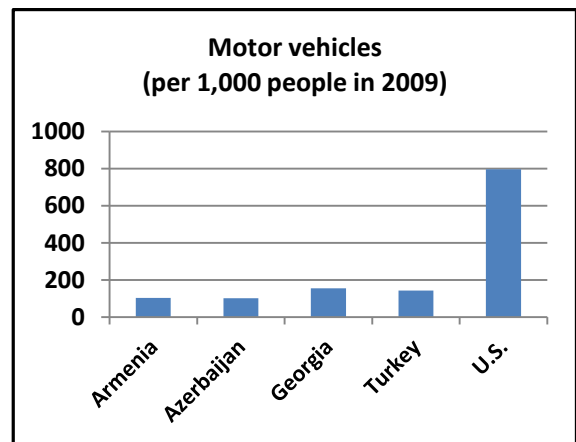
The legacies of Soviet rule and underdevelopment also affect the road and railroad infrastructure in the region. In addition, current conflicts among the countries in the region are imposing new barriers. For example the armed conflict between Georgia and the separatist region of Abkhazia led to prolonged disruptions of the road and railroad links from Russia to Armenia via Georgia.

Of the four countries, Turkey has the best transportation system, only moderately below the European Union's average.<sup>57</sup> More than a decade of rapid economic growth allowed the government to almost double public investment in transport infrastructure from 1.6 percent of GDP in 2004 to 1.92 percent in 2010. As a result, Turkey's transport sector has been growing both in terms of its size and the quality of the network. Of the various modes of transportation, the quality of roads and ports rate high, while the quality of railways remains poor.



Source: World Bank

Compared to Turkey, the other three have relatively poor road networks.<sup>58</sup> Although at independence they inherited a relatively well developed and dense road network, years of conflict, neglect, and scarce resources led to general deterioration of roads. Beginning in the 2000s, the return of political stability and economic growth enabled governments to increase public expenditures in the road infrastructure. However, the road conditions remain poor, due to the inferior quality of construction and materials used, and the lack of regular preventive maintenance after road construction and rehabilitation.



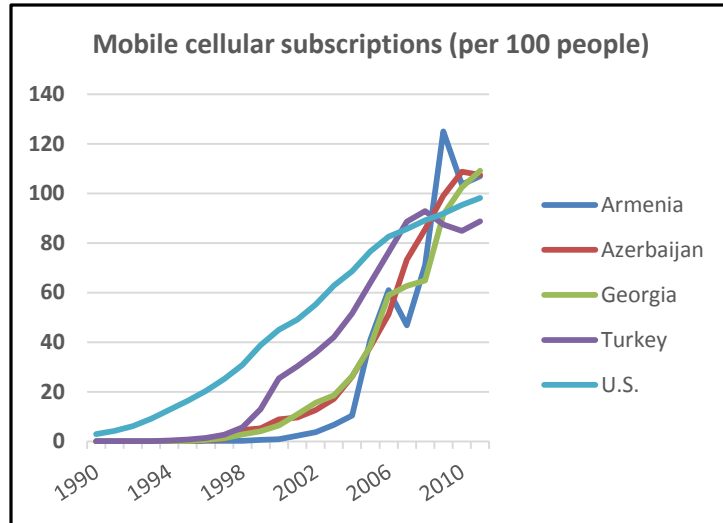
Source: World Bank

Car ownership is still rare in the Trans-Caucasus, but is rapidly expanding. The region has one of the world's highest traffic-accident rates, with many fatal accidents. Drivers frequently ignore traffic rules and regulations.

## Other Modes of Transportation

Although air and sea transportation has seen an increase in the last decade, they still remain relatively underdeveloped in the four countries. Both Turkey and Georgia have major sea ports. The Incirlik Air Force base, located in southern Turkey, near the Mediterranean Sea, is host to a large U.S. Air Force component.

## Communications Infrastructure

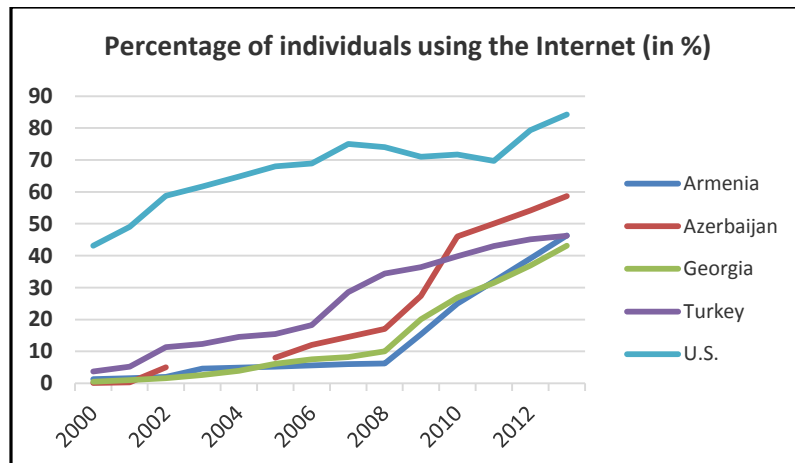


Source: World Bank

For many years the four countries had poor communication infrastructure – the number of phone lines was limited. In the last decade, however, all four countries have invested in mobile phone infrastructure and now cell phones are ubiquitous.

The countries in the region have witnessed a rapid raise in the access to, and use of, Internet. However, the percentage of people online is well below what we see in the United States. According to one survey from 2012, 33 percent of Armenians, 26 percent of Georgians, and only 11 percent of Azeris

go online every day.<sup>59</sup> Almost half of the population does not use the Internet at all.



Source: International Telecommunication Union

## Regional Security Issues

### Why Regional Security Issues Matter to You as a Marine

A thorough understanding of a region is difficult without an account of its most significant security challenges. These challenges tend to affect not only relations between states in the region but also the behavior of its people and the choices they make. Regional security issues encompass a host of topics ranging from wars between states, to insurgencies, to organized crime, to weak institutions, to systemic corruption. Some of them involve violence, while others weaken states and societies and have the potential to turn low level conflicts into violent confrontations.

#### Introduction

The countries in the Trans-Caucasus are facing multiple security challenges, ranging from armed conflicts, to organized crime, to widespread corruption. The roots of these challenges are numerous, but can be grouped in a few categories.

First, for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia there is the Soviet legacy. Being part of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union denied them the chance to develop independent political and state institutions. When the three states gained independence in 1991, they lacked the essential experience and institutions to quickly establish a stable order.

In addition, the Russian and later Soviet rules sustained “frozen conflicts,” wherein authorities were able to prevent, sometimes using violence, disagreements and conflicts between ethnic groups from escalating into full-blown armed struggles. Thus, when the Soviet rule in the three countries began to weaken, various ethnic groups sought to carve their own independent states, unhappy with the prospects of becoming minorities in independent Azerbaijan and Georgia. These so-called “frozen conflicts” no longer fell under a political framework to maintain stability or security. Only Armenia did not witness a secessionist movement. These armed struggles added to the political instability in the early post-independence period and continue to affect politics in all three states even today.

Second, all four states are undergoing transformation of their political order and institutions. In Turkey, this transformation is relatively gradual and does not seem to pose a threat to order and stability. In the other three countries, however, the transformation in the last two and a half decades has been rapid and volatile, often leading to instability and violent conflict. Although the three countries have come a long way in establishing order and stability, their political and state institutions are still not sufficiently consolidated and therefore conflicts can easily destabilize the states.

Third, the four countries (with the possible exception of Turkey, which by regional standards is a big country) are located in a region where the interests of large outside powers intersect. Members of the European Union, the U.S., Iran, and above all Russia, consider this region important to their national security and accordingly play a role in regional politics. Their policies in the region often run at cross purpose.

Fourth, the region is near volatile, conflict-prone states and areas including Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia. Conflicts in these areas often affect developments in the Trans-Caucasus.

Fifth, for political and historic reasons, the four countries in the regions do not find it easy to cooperate with each other. That makes it difficult to solve existing conflicts within and outside their borders and to prevent new ones.

Regional Security Issues:

- **Separatist movements**
- **Conflicts between states**
- **External powers**
- **Governance and rule of law**

### **Separatist Movements**

Of the four countries, only Armenia did not face an armed movement trying to break away from the state, although it actively supported one in a neighboring state. There are four significant conflicts in the Trans-Caucasus in which an ethnic group wants to break away from a state and either join another state or create its own independent state.

For up to date information on various armed conflicts worldwide, including political, military, and humanitarian trends, see the **Armed Conflict Database** maintained by the International Institute for Strategic Studies at <https://acd-iiss-org.lomc.idm.oclc.org/en>

### ***Nagorno Karabakh***

Nagorno Karabakh is a highly contested region in Azerbaijan.<sup>60</sup> The Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires have fought in the past for control over the region and its demographic makeup had frequently changed according to what power dominated it. More recently, both Armenians and Azeris claimed the mountainous territory as historically their own and go to great lengths to provide proof to support their claims. The two groups have sought to dominate the area and have frequently clashed in the past.

The present-day conflict over the region has its roots in Stalin's decision in the early 1920s to include Nagorno Karabakh as an autonomous region in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic rather than in the Armenia Soviet Socialist Republic. Although the Armenian population of the region was unhappy with this decision, Soviet rule prevented a clash between Armenians and Azeris over the status of the region. By late 1980s, the region had a population of over 120,000, of which 76 percent were Armenians, 22 percent Azeris, and the rest were other ethnicities.

When the power of the Soviet Union weakened in the late 1980s, the Armenian population in Nagorno Karabakh did not want to remain part of Azerbaijan and instead sought to join Armenia. As a result, relations between Armenians and Azeris, not only in Nagorno Karabakh but also in Armenia and Azerbaijan, began to deteriorate. Soon thousands of refugees began to move between the two republics – ethnic Armenians left Azerbaijan while ethnic Azeris left Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Moscow tried to maintain control by making leadership changes in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and establishing a special governing administration in Nagorno Karabakh, but violence persisted and more refugees left from both countries.

Shortly after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Nagorno Karabakh declared independence (however, many Armenians preferred that Nagorno Karabakh join Armenia rather than declare independence). The conflict turned into a full-blown war in early 1992. Armenian forces were able to take over not only Nagorno Karabakh but also surrounding areas in Azerbaijan. In the process, most of the Azeri population was driven out of the occupied territories. Meanwhile, the exodus of ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan was almost complete. About 15,000 people on both sides lost their lives and hundreds of thousands people became refugees.<sup>61</sup> The conflict also had international consequences – Azerbaijan and Turkey imposed a blockade on Armenia, further straining the newly independent state’s economy.



Nagorno Karabakh (Source: Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training)

The war continued until 1994, when Russia brokered a ceasefire and forced Armenia and Azerbaijan to start negotiations. Since then the conflict has been frozen, although there have been frequent violations of the ceasefire; minor skirmishes with casualties along the line of separation have occurred frequently. Armenians still control

both Nagorno Karabakh and a large area around it as well. However, no state has recognized the sovereignty of the self-proclaimed state; according to international law, Nagorno Karabakh is still considered part of Azerbaijan. Twenty years after the 1994 ceasefire was concluded, there are still over 600,000 refugees from the conflict in Azerbaijan alone.

In the initial phase of the conflict, when Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of the Soviet Union, the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh did not attract international attention, as it was considered an internal Soviet matter. However, after the two countries became independent, the entire region, including Nagorno Karabakh attracted considerable international attention. The so-called Minsk Group, co-chaired by France, Russia, and the United States, was set up in order to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, after countless face-to-face negotiations between Armenians and Azeris and more than twenty years after the signing of the ceasefire, no end to the conflict is in sight. Azerbaijan wants to re-integrate Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan. Armenia, on the other hand, while not formally recognizing the sovereignty of the self-proclaimed state, insists that the people of Nagorno Karabakh have the right of self-determination. Armenia considers any potential Azeri threat against



Nagorno Karabakh as a threat to its own security. There are growing concerns that frustrated with the stalemate Azeris and Armenians may resume the war.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict inflames passions in the region and beyond. Ramil Safarov, an Azeri military officer used an axe to murder in his sleep an Armenian officer, Girgen Margajan, while both men were attending a NATO-sponsored English-language course in Hungary in 2004. Safavor, a refugee from Nagorno Karabakh, justified the murder in court by referring to Armenian atrocities against Azeris in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. After eight years in prison, Hungarian authorities extradited Safavor to Azerbaijan to serve the rest of his 25-year sentence. However, upon return to Azerbaijan, Safavor was immediately pardoned by the president and given a hero-welcome. This move created political and diplomatic crisis involving Hungary, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and the United States. It also brought Azerbaijan and Armenia close to resuming the war over Nagorno Karabakh.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Abkhazia***

Abkhazia is a breakaway region in the northwestern tip of Georgia within which Russia maintains a military base. Historically a home to diverse population, the region has been ruled by various outside powers and accordingly its demographic makeup has changed frequently depending on what power was in dominance. Nevertheless, the region has traditionally had a very close relationship with Georgia and at various times, Abkhazia was part of Georgia for extended periods. Ethnic Abkhaz are mostly Christian, speak a language different from Georgian, and consider themselves a distinct nation.<sup>63</sup>



The separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Source: RFE/RL)

After the Red Army took over the region, Abkhazia became an autonomous republic in the Soviet Union. However, in 1931 Stalin incorporated Abkhazia within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic although it retained a nominal autonomy. During the Soviet period, the Abkhaz complained that Georgian authorities were attempting to assimilate them by destroying their identity, culture, and language. In the 1970s and 1980s ethnic Abkhaz demanded that the republic be taken out of Georgia. On the other hand, Georgians complained that ethnic Abkhaz had too many privileges at the expense of the ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia.

In 1989 the population of Abkhazia was over 520,000, of which ethnic Abkhaz were 18 percent and ethnic Georgians 46 percent (the rest were Armenians, Russians and several smaller ethnic groups).<sup>64</sup> The growing Georgian nationalism in the late 1980s made the ethnic Abkhaz feel threatened and in 1990 the republic announced its separation from the Georgian SSR, although it left the door open for a federation.

After Georgia declared independence in 1991, the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia deteriorated further and in 1992 the slow intensity tensions and clashes escalated into a full-blown

war. After some initial Georgian successes in the war, the Abkhaz forces, with major support from Russia and thousands of volunteers from the North Caucasus, managed to gain control over most of Abkhazia. At the end of 1993 Russia mediated a truce which was, with one major exception in 1998, largely respected for the next 15 years. International peacekeepers, mostly from Russia, were deployed to the region to observe the ceasefire.

In 1999 the Abkhazia formally declared independence, but it received no formal recognition from other states. However, following the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, Moscow formally recognized the independence of Abkhazia and negotiated security agreements with it. Russia deployed a large military force in the breakaway state and took formal control over the border with Georgia. Although a few more states recognized Ossetia as independent, according to international law, the region is still part of Georgia.

The conflict took a great toll on the warring parties. In 1991-93 alone, thousands of civilians were killed on both sides and hundreds of thousands became internally displaced persons. The Abkhaz forces pushed ethnic Georgians out of Abkhazia. The population of the breakaway region declined from 520,000 in 1989 to 240,000 in 2011. The Abkhaz became 51 percent of the population, while the ethnic Georgians declined to 19 percent. The local economy, destroyed by the wars and isolated from trade with Georgia and the rest of the world, became fully dependent on Russia. Moscow further consolidated its hold on the region by issuing Russian passports to anyone in Abkhazia who sought one.

### ***South Ossetia***

South Ossetia is a small mountainous region in northern Georgia. It had been dominated by various empires and the population's demographic makeup changed frequently. Nevertheless, the region's history was intrinsically tied to Georgia's history, although today, like in Abkhazia, Russia maintains a military base there. Many Georgians see South Ossetia as one of the oldest centers of Georgian history and culture and consider ethnic Ossetians as recent settlers to the region. On the other hand, Ossetians, who speak an Eastern Iranian language, claim to be the descendants of the original settlers in the region.

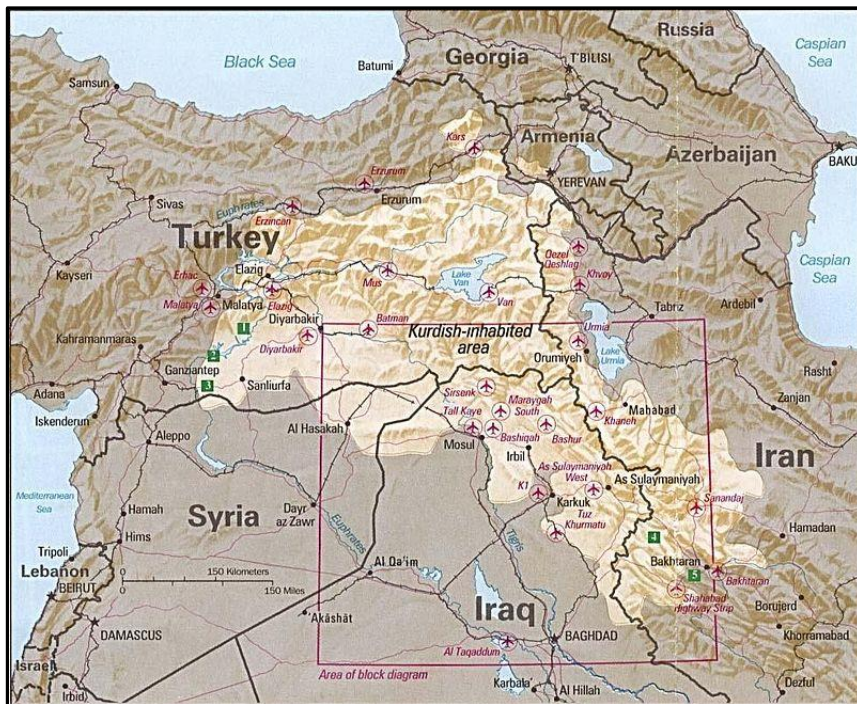
When Moscow established the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922, it included South Ossetia as an autonomous region in it, over Ossetians' objections. In 1989, the South Ossetia had a population of nearly 100,000, of which 66 percent were ethnic Ossetians and 29 percent ethnic Georgians.<sup>65</sup> When the Soviet rule began to weaken in the late 1980s, Georgia sought independence from the Soviet Union, while Ossetians sought to break away from Georgia and either join Russia or become an independent state.<sup>66</sup>

The tensions between Georgian authorities and South Ossetia gradually escalated into armed skirmishes and finally into a full-blown armed conflict in 1991. The war lasted until 1992 when a ceasefire was reached and a peacekeeping force including Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian forces was set up. The Ossetians retained control of the region. There were numerous attempts to negotiate a peaceful solution to the conflict, but frequent outbreaks in hostilities made the conflict intractable. The armed conflict killed thousands and led to ethnic cleansing. Most ethnic Georgians left South Ossetia and many Ossetians left for Russia. In 2006 an overwhelming number of Ossetians voted in a referendum to declare South Ossetia an independent state.

The stalemate was broken in 2008 when Georgia attempted to regain control over the region by force. There is no consensus who initiated the conflict as the outbreak of hostilities was preceded by numerous incidents and provocations. Claiming that its peacekeepers were under attack, a massive Russian force crossed into Georgia. Within three days, the force not only pushed Georgian troops out of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also penetrated deep into Georgian territory, destroying military and civilian infrastructure in the process. Georgian troops could not put up much of a fight. West European states were able to broker a ceasefire and Georgia found itself losing the few remaining areas in South Ossetia and Abkhazia it controlled before the outbreak of hostilities. Soon, as in the case of Abkhazia, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia. Nevertheless, according to international law, the region is still considered a part of Georgia.

### ***The Kurdish Conflict***

The Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the world. Numbering near 30 million, the Kurds inhabit mainly regions in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. There are also small numbers in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and Russia. Kurds speak the Kurdish language and the majority is Sunni Muslim.



Map of the area populated by Kurds (Source: CIA)

Ethnic Kurds constitute 15 to 20 percent of Turkey's population.<sup>67</sup> They are largely concentrated in the southeastern region of the country and in urban areas. Since its creation in 1923, the Turkish Republic has denied the existence of ethnic Kurds in the country and has sought to assimilate those who consider themselves Kurds. Accordingly, Turkish authorities have used harsh measures, including violence, to suppress Kurdish identity. This long-standing Turkish policy changed only recently.<sup>68</sup>

In 1978, Abdullah Ocalan, an ethnic Kurd, and a few of his associates founded the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) whose goal was to create by armed struggle an independent Kurdistan for all Kurds in the Middle East. The movement soon turned into an insurgency and in 1984 the Turkish military waged an on-and-off campaign against PKK. The struggle was most intense during the 1990s. The PKK was able to establish a complex support network, partially financed through criminal activities and contributions from Kurds in Turkey and Europe. The movement also established safe havens in Iraq, Syria, and Europe. Since 1984 the armed conflict has claimed the lives of over 40,000 people, displaced nearly a million people, and has displaced over 200,000 refugees.<sup>69</sup>

In the early 2000s the conflict's dynamics began to change. First, in 1999, the Turkish authorities scored a major victory by apprehending and then imprisoning Abdullah Ocalan, who called from prison for an end to the armed struggle. Second, unable to prevail in the conflict, both sides began to modify their goals and approaches. The government recognized that the integration of Kurds into Turkish society would require political, cultural and economic development approaches in addition to traditional security approaches. For their part, the Kurdish movement, now broader than PKK, dropped secessionist demands and instead demanded greater cultural and political autonomy within Turkey. Turkish authorities implemented cultural and political measures that virtually recognized the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity and interests.

Despite the progress in solving the conflict, PKK's armed struggle is still underway and the number of casualties continues to grow. The organization still possesses the ability to mobilize resources and inflict damage on Turkish interests.

### **Conflicts Between States**

The end of the Soviet Union created new relationships between the states in the Trans-Caucasus, ranging from friendly to hostile.<sup>70</sup> Turkey and Azerbaijan developed the closest relationship in the region, based on history, culture, and strategic interests. Sharing the same religion (although Turks are mostly Sunni and Azeri are mostly Shi'a), mutually intelligible languages, and a common ancestry facilitated the development of close political, economic, military, and cultural ties. As a consequence, Turkey supports Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, imposing a blockade on Armenia and generally developing no relationships with the newly independent state. Turkey's confrontation with Armenia also stems from the refusal of Turkish authorities to recognize what Armenians consider a genocide perpetuated by Ottoman authorities during and in the aftermath of World War I. Turkey is also suspicious of potential Armenian claims on Turkish lands ethnic Armenians used to inhabit until the end of the same war.

Georgia is staying neutral in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh. It sees Russia as the greatest threat to its territorial integrity and independence and accordingly strives to maintain friendly relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. However, the status of the Armenian and Azeri minorities in Georgia which complain of systemic discrimination has the potential to undermine relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>71</sup>

One of the consequences of the confrontation over Nagorno Karabakh is Armenia's isolation from regional infrastructure projects. Gas and oil pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey bypass Armenian territory and instead go through Georgia. Thus Armenia is not only prevented from receiving energy from nearby fields in Azerbaijan and Central Asia but also misses on profiting from transit fees from oil and gas pipelines. Instead the country is forced to seek energy from Iran and Russia. In addition, Georgia's conflict with Russia over Abkhazia cut off the only railroad linking Armenia to Russia via Georgia.

### **External Powers**

Because of its location and the small size of the countries (except for Turkey), many of the challenges to the security of the states are external to the region. While during the Soviet time, the three countries experienced relative peace and isolation (except for the Soviet suppression of domestic dissent), the

post-independence period has been marked not only by conflicts between the states in the regions, but also a growing interest of outside powers in regional affairs.

## **Russia**

The end of the Soviet Union redefined Russia's role in the Trans-Caucasus. Of all external powers, Russia has the most significant presence in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia due to its status as their former ruler. In addition, the end of the Cold War allowed Russia to establish a closer relationship with Turkey based on economic interests and a joint interest in preserving peace and stability in the region.



Political map of Russia's Northern Caucasus (Source: Wikimedia)

Russia has substantial security challenges in the North Caucasus where ethnic conflicts and Islamic insurgencies test Russian authorities' hold on power, particularly in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia.<sup>72</sup> In Russia's view, ensuring stability in the Russian Northern Caucasus is indivisible from achieving stability in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, or Southern Caucasus.<sup>73</sup>

Accordingly Russia is actively involved in the three states, trying to exert influence over their foreign and domestic politics.

Russia's role in the region is not universally accepted. Moscow has forged a very close relationship with Armenia, including maintaining military bases on its territory and dominating a large portion of Armenian economy;<sup>74</sup> Armenia sees Russia as the ultimate protector of its sovereignty and territory and accepts that the country is part of Moscow's sphere of influence. Armenia also expects that Russia would defend Armenia against potential Turkish aggression and would protect Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh against Azerbaijan.

Georgia and Azerbaijan, on the other hand are much more suspicious of Russian motives in the region. Georgia blames Russia for the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and suspects that Moscow has an interest in keeping Georgia weak. Azerbaijan, too, is suspicious of Moscow's motives in the region, but also knows that taking back Nagorno Karabakh is hard to achieve without Russia's acquiescence. Therefore, Baku attempts to maintain friendly relations with Moscow.

Turkey has a growing relationship with Russia, fueled by rapidly expanding economic exchange. The energy-hungry Turkish economy receives an ever-growing share of Russia's energy exports, while Turkey provides routes for Russia's oil and gas lines to European markets. At the same time, Turkey finds itself at odds with Russia over Nagorno Karabakh, where Ankara supports Azerbaijan and Moscow supports Armenia.



## *United States*

Until the early 1990s, the United States' involvement in the Trans-Caucasus was limited to relations with Turkey. However, after Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia gained independence and Moscow's influence in the region weakened, the United States' interest in the region dramatically increased. The U.S. has three primary geopolitical objectives in the region: security and stability, democratization, and economic access to both the region's underutilized natural resources and the nascent infrastructure corridor for transporting Central Asian products west while avoiding Iran and Russia.<sup>75</sup>

Of the four countries, the U.S. has the longest and most extensive relationship with Turkey, including security and defense ties dating back to the beginning of the Cold War. Turkey is one of the most important American allies in the Middle East and Europe, providing the U.S. military with easy access to troubled spots in the region.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s Georgia reoriented its foreign policy; from cautiously seeking cooperation with European institutions to declaring membership in NATO and the European Union as national priorities. Accordingly, Georgia and the U.S. began to develop extensive security and defense ties. Despite its limited size and resources, the Georgian military trained and deployed with U.S. Marines a battalion-size rotational force to Iraq and later Afghanistan as part of the Georgia Deployment Program-International Security Assistance Force (GDP-ISAF).

Azerbaijan has a more cautious approach to cooperation with the U.S. The U.S. sees Azerbaijan not only as a source of energy products, but also as an alternative route to the energy lines from Central Asia bypassing Russia. Azerbaijan is also seen as a secular bulwark against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran. However, Azerbaijan is reluctant to antagonize Russia which resents the expansion of American influence in its proverbial backyard. Accordingly, Azerbaijan is seeking to expand economic and defense ties with the U.S. while is careful not to be seen as an American ally.<sup>76</sup>

Of the four countries in the region, Armenia has the most limited relationship with the United States because of its extensive ties with Russia.

## *Iran*

For many years, Iran's presence in the region was limited to relations with Turkey. The end of the Soviet Union also opened the door to Iran's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. So far, Iran's influence in the region has been limited (unlike its influence in the Middle East). A key exception to Iran's relatively cordial relations with the countries in the Trans-Caucasus is its relationship with Azerbaijan. Almost 20 percent of Iran's population are ethnic Azeris, living across the border with Azerbaijan. In fact there are more ethnic Azeris living in Iran than in Azerbaijan. Iran fears that Azerbaijan foments secession among Iran's ethnic Azeris and at the same time provides a secular alternative to political Islam. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, suspects Tehran of fomenting religious extremism in Azerbaijan.<sup>77</sup>

Iran also has very good relations with Armenia. Turkey and Azerbaijan's blockade on Armenia forced Yerevan to seek closer ties with Iran. This move suited Iran, which sought to break its own international isolation caused by Tehran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and attempts to spread its influence in the Middle East.



## European Union

The European Union (EU) – a highly integrated political, economic, and social union of 28 states in Europe – has had a long relationship with Turkey. The Union established relationships with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia after the three states gained independence. The strength of the relationships with each state varies. Turkey seeks to become a member of the EU and the two sides initiated accession negotiations in 2004. In order to join, Turkey must meet the EU’s approximately 80,000 pages of rules and regulations in various areas including political, economic, social, etc.<sup>78</sup> In other words, the EU has a tremendous influence and effect over countries seeking to join the Union.

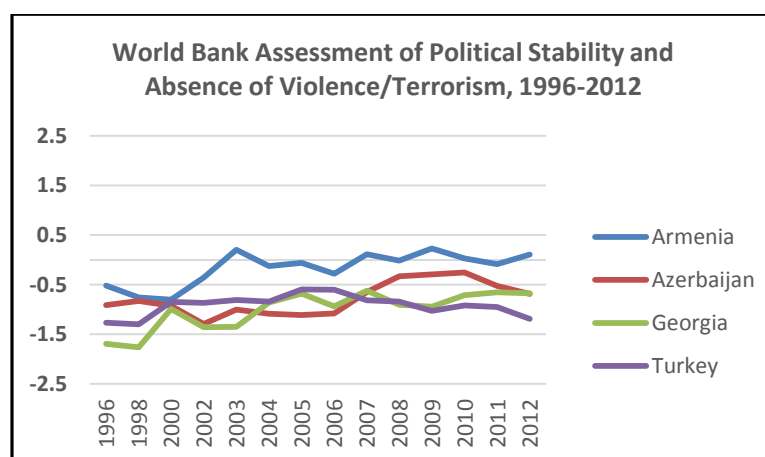
Of the other three countries, only Georgia is actively seeking to join the EU. However, it is a long way from meeting the criteria for membership and becoming a member is going to take many years. Meanwhile Georgia has managed to sign a partnership agreement with the Union, a step seen as an essential phase towards EU membership in the future. This move was strongly opposed by Russia which resents the EU’s move into the region and fears that the partnership agreement would give the Union a commercial advantage over Russia in the region.<sup>79</sup>

Armenia and Azerbaijan have a more limited relationship with the EU. Instead, Armenia seeks closer political and economic integration with Russia. Azerbaijan, although open to cooperation with the EU, does not see a membership in the Union as a foreign policy priority.

The European Union also seeks to use the Trans-Caucasus as a transportation route bringing oil and gas from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Europe, bypassing Russia. This policy, in addition to attempts to integrate the Trans-Caucasus in Europe, causes frictions between the Union and Russia.

## Governance and Rule of Law

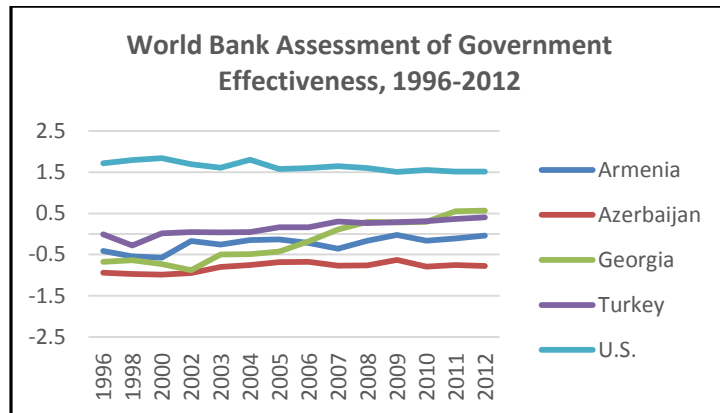
Although the four states have gone a long way toward establishing stable state and political institutions, they are still very vulnerable to external and internal sources of instability. The institutions of governance, including parliament, judicial system, bureaucracy, political parties, and other institutions suffer from various shortcomings including lack of transparency and accountability, arbitrariness of decision-making, weak rule of law, a tendency to serve the interest of those in power, lack of checks and balances, incompetence, corruption, etc. As a result the institutions of governance are frequently unable to function properly, do not meet public expectations, and lack public trust.



Source: World Bank

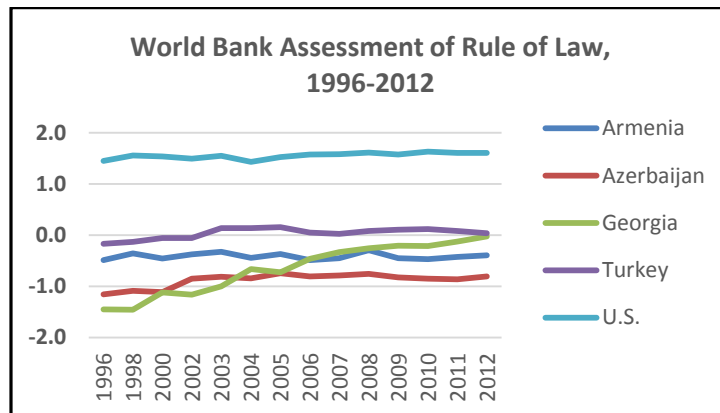
The assessment of political stability and absence of violence reflects perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism (Estimate ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).

However, there are differences between the states. Since the last military coup in the 1980s, Turkey has managed to hold on a regular basis relatively free and fair elections and the peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. After gaining independence in 1991, Georgia experienced the first peaceful and orderly transfer of power from one political party to another only in 2012-2013. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has seen power grow more firmly in the hands of the Aliyev family since 1993, first Heydar Aliyev and then his son, Ilham. Although the Aliyev family's hold on power seems to have provided stability to the state, it also makes the political system more prone to instability and violence in the future as political and state institutions have little chance to mature.



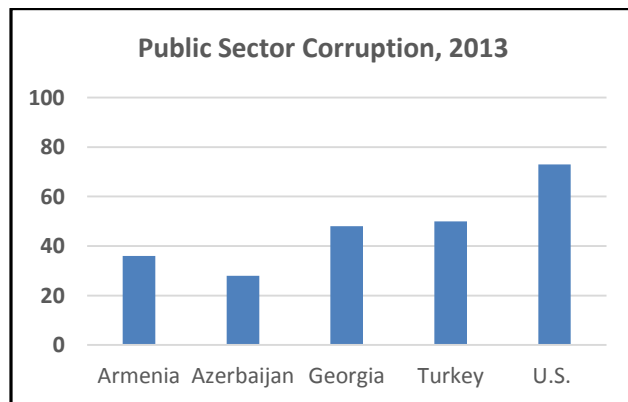
Source: World Bank

Assessment of government effectiveness reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).



Source: World Bank

Assessment of rule of law reflects perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).



Source: Transparency International

The perceived levels of public sector corruption, 2013 (ranges from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean)).

The concentration of power tends to corrupt governing institutions and in the long run weaken them. Accordingly, governments in Turkey and Georgia are seen as more effective, and better at resisting corruption compared to the governments in Azerbaijan and Armenia. The rule of law is also seen as having deeper roots in the former two countries than in the latter two. Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that even the scores for Turkey and Georgia are relatively low compared to those in Western societies.

One of the reasons for the instability inflicting all four countries is the transition from an authoritarian political system to a democratic one. Studies indicate that moving a state along the path from authoritarianism to democracy actually increases the likelihood for instability and violence.<sup>80</sup> For example, it was during the transition from an oppressive Soviet rule to a more liberal political order when ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan and Georgia demanded greater rights and dormant ethnic conflicts turned into full-blown armed struggle.

The political transition in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia was also accompanied by an economic transition from a Soviet, command economy to free-market economy. This transition, however partial, brought about more instability as old economic structures disappeared and the new ones failed to deliver on societies' expectations. It took almost a decade for the states to finally bring some stability to their economies.

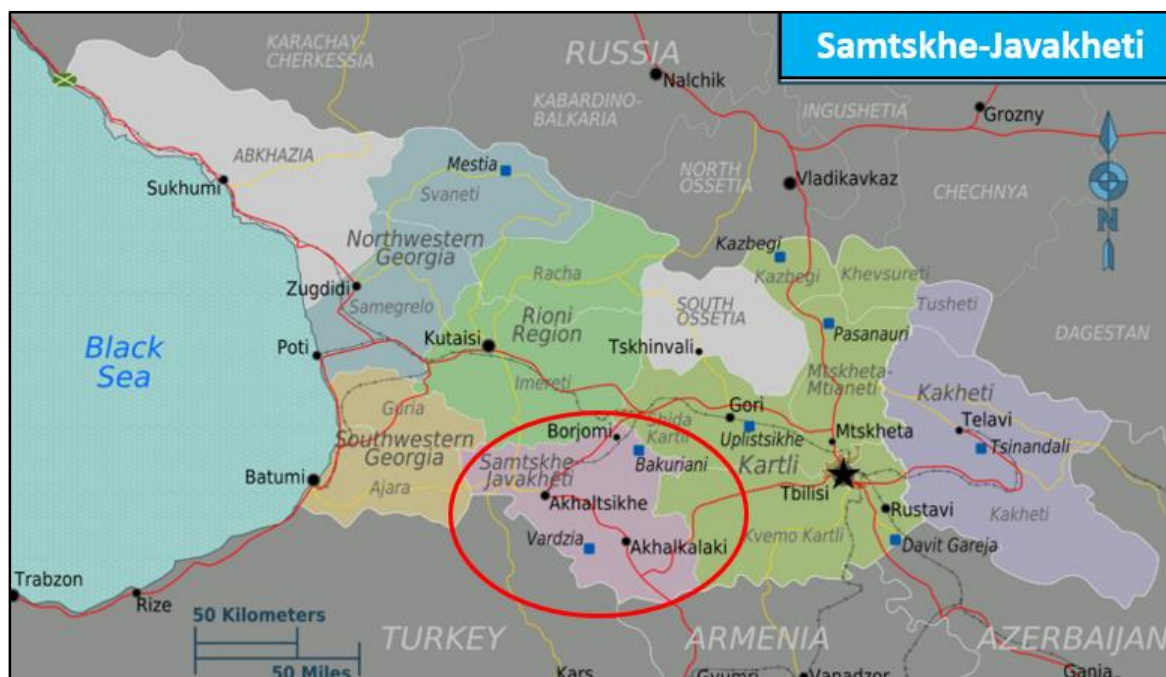
Although all four countries have attained varying degrees of stability, their incomplete political and economic transitions pose many risks to lasting stability in the region overall. The states are prone to experience political and economic instability during changes in the domestic and international environments. Even Turkey, which has a large, diversified economy and has experienced a relatively stable political transition in the last twenty years, witnessed sustained public protests in 2013 which posed multiple demands on the government.

## Case Study: The Culture of Javakheti Armenians in Georgia's Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda Districts

The case study in this chapter introduces a culture from the Trans-Caucasus region, using the concepts introduced in the Operational Culture General (OCG) document (see attached document).

### Introduction

Georgia is home to a diverse population comprised of numerous ethnic, religious, and other cultural groups. Ethnic Armenians live in almost all of Georgia's administrative regions and comprise around 8.1 percent of the total population, or nearly 249,000 people.<sup>81</sup> The compact groups of ethnic Armenians in Georgia are chiefly located in three areas – Samtskhe-Javakheti, Tbilisi, and Abkhazia. These groups have different backgrounds and experiences and accordingly have different cultures. The three groups are distinct and have few links to one another.



Samtskhe-Javakheti (Source: Wikimedia)

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the culture of the Javakheti Armenians living in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts. The two districts are included in the Samtskhe-Javakheti

administrative region of southern Georgia, bordering Armenia and Turkey. Although there are ethnic Armenians living throughout the Samtskhe-Javakheti administrative region, they represent an overwhelming majority in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts.



Samtskhe-Javakheti Administrative Region (Source: Wikipedia)

All ethnic Armenians living in the Samtskhe-Javakheti administrative region call themselves, and are known by others as, Javakheti Armenians. However, for the purposes of this lesson, only the ethnic Armenians in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts will be called Javakheti Armenians for short. Indeed, the ethnic Armenians in these two districts share a culture that not only distinguishes them from ethnic Armenians in Tbilisi and Abkhazia, but also from the ethnic Armenians living in the other districts of the Samtskhe-Javakheti administrative region. In addition, although the region of Javakheti historically includes an area larger than the districts of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda (the districts are named after the two main towns in the region), for the purpose of this lesson, it will mean the two districts only.

According to Georgia’s 2002 Census data, the population of Javakheti is 95,280, of which 60,957 live in the Akhalkalaki district and 34,305 in the Ninotsminda district. Of the total population, 90,373 (or 95 percent) are ethnic Armenians, 3,690 (3 percent) are ethnic Georgians, and the rest includes ethnic Russians and very few ethnic Greeks, Ukrainians, and Ossetians.<sup>82</sup> Only 16 percent of the population in the two districts is urban, and the rest is rural.

Armenians have been living in Georgia for centuries, mainly as urban dwellers engaged in trade and crafts. However, the origin of the Javakheti Armenians is highly contentious issue between Georgians and Armenians. Ethnic Armenians claim that there have always been Armenians in Javakheti. According to Georgians, however, compact settlements of Armenians in Javakheti started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the wars between the Russian and Ottoman empires. Russia defeated the Ottomans in 1829, annexed Javakheti and consequently drove its Muslim population out of the region. The Ottomans, for their part, drove ethnic Armenians out of the Ottoman Empire and 30,000 of

them settled in Javakheti. A second wave of Armenians arrived to Javakheti from Eastern Anatolia after the forced expulsion of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.<sup>83</sup>



Downtown Akhalkalaki (Source: EurasiaNet)

### Physical Geography

Javakheti is part of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, located in a volcanic plateau. Its elevation ranges from nearly 6,000 feet (Lake Paravani) to 10,830 ft. (Mt. Didi Abuli). The plateau is a large grassland plain with several lakes, including Georgia's largest, Lake Paravani. The lake is the source of the largest river in the region – the Paravani River.

The region's high elevation and its distance from the seas determine its climate. The winters are very cold and dry. The average January temperature is 13° F, and dropping as low as -36° F. The average August temperature is 56° F. Annual precipitation is low, averaging 733mm a year, with June being the rainiest with 116mm and December being the driest. The length of snow coverage on the ground is 100 days a year.

The region's flora and fauna is typical of alpine zones. The plateau is mostly forestless, covered with grass and mountain vegetation. There are wetlands around the lakes. The region is rich in medicinal herbs – peppermint, chamomile, St. John's wort, stinging nettle, etc. The fauna includes wolves, foxes, porcupines, chipmunks, mice, skunks, and various migrating birds. In the past, the Javakheti region used to have large forests.

The region is a source of basalt, limestone, volcanic slag, clay, and pumice. The topsoil is relatively fertile, although the climate and range of temperatures limit the variety of agricultural products. The three main crops grown in the region are potatoes (almost half of the arable land), wheat, and barley. The grassy land also supports the livestock sector.



The volcanic mountains of Javakheti have high seismic activity. An earthquake in 1900 destroyed much of Akhalkalaki and killed 1,000 people in the area. Accordingly, the population in the region uses extra building materials to strengthen the foundations and walls of structures.

Until recently, geography was a big reason for the physical isolation of the region from the rest of the country. In fact, in a public survey in the mid-2000s, the population identified the lack of adequate roads as the most acute local problem, well ahead of concerns with high fuel prices, lack of markets to sell agricultural products, limited access to water, etc. However, in the last decade the improvement in the road infrastructure has begun to address the challenges of geographic isolation.

### **The Economy of the Culture**

Due to physical and cultural isolation, Javakheti has historically been underdeveloped economically. Nevertheless, during Soviet times Javakheti Armenians used to be relatively well-off because the region used to enjoy a special economic status specific for closed military zones along the Soviet border. Access to the zone was limited – foreigners were barred from entering the zone, while Soviet citizens needed a special permit to do so. On the other hand, workers in the area received extra pay and benefits, and employment was plentiful. In addition, Akhalkalaki was home to a large military base, which was the main pillar of the local economy, providing jobs, social security, health care, and even education to the local inhabitants. In addition, the products of the local economy had a readily available huge market in the rest of the Soviet Union. The presence of the military base and the region's status as a closed military zone further isolated the region from the Georgian economy and instead made it dependent on Russia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's independence led to a dramatic change in the region's economy: Javakheti lost access to the large Soviet market; it lost the benefits of its closed military zone status, and the flow of cheap goods and services ended. At the same time, Javakheti found itself in a newly independent country which lacked the resources to provide for its citizens, while facing civil unrest and political instability.

In the 1990s Javakheti experienced a dramatic transition from a planned economy to a free market economy. In other words, the region witnessed a fast change from one system of exchange to another.

One of the most significant changes to the local economy was the closure of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki. Under Tbilisi's pressure, Russia was forced to close it in 2007. Capable of housing a garrison of 15,000, the base was the pillar of the local economy. People who were previously directly employed on base and those whose businesses serviced the needs of military personnel lost their only source of income. The military base even facilitated smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol, fuel, and food, as Russian military vehicles were not stopped at Russian and Georgian border check points.<sup>84</sup> To the surprise of many, however, the local inhabitants managed to adapt to the changed economic landscape.

Javakheti Armenians adopted various economic and social strategies to survive in the new economic environment. First, they became less dependent on the state for employment, goods, and services. Private enterprises, previously illegal under Soviet rule, became widespread.

Second, the informal economy expanded substantially. Unable to find jobs in the formal economy, the informal economy became the fallback positions, especially for women.<sup>85</sup> Another reason for the large size of the informal economy until very recently, was the weakness of state institutions in Georgia and their inability to enforce the law, particularly in the Javakheti region. For example, a study of the local economy found that 70 percent of the existing retail shops in the Akhalkalaki district, particularly small kiosks, are not legally registered with the tax department, and thus not paying taxes.<sup>86</sup>

Third, another strategy Javakheti Armenians adopted to cope with economic hardship was to emigrate permanently or to seek seasonal work abroad, especially in Russia, but also in Turkey and Europe. Up to 10-15 percent of the local population travels to Russia as seasonal workers.<sup>87</sup> The vast majority of seasonal migrant workers are young males. Remittances from migrant workers abroad are the second largest source of income in the region. One survey indicates that in the Akhalkalaki district alone, over 26 percent of families had family members working abroad; in other words, a large portion of the local population depends on remittances from migrant workers.<sup>88</sup>

Fourth, another way to earn a living is to attach yourself to existing informal networks which have access to economic resources. However, this strategy requires that one either belongs to the right family or one pledges loyalty to the leaders of the network. Although this practice may be perceived as corruption by American standards, it is actually evidence of a different economic system at work; it is a different form of exchange.

### ***Industries***

Agriculture is the primary industry in Javakheti, engaging the vast majority of the rural population.<sup>89</sup> Shortly after independence in 1991, farmland was privatized. Most of the arable land has been owned by single households in small tracts, 1-1.5 hectares, not suitable for high-crop farming. However, in many villages a few families have managed to accumulate between 200 and 300 hectares of land through access to capital or bribes of local officials.

The lack of large land holdings, outdated farming machinery, and a limited access to financing have led to an ineffective agricultural sector. In addition, until the late 2000s, the lack of modern road infrastructure hampered the local producers' access to markets for their products.

Potatoes are by far the most popular crop in the region, followed by wheat and barley. Another sector is livestock, although most of these products are consumed on the local market or by the producers.

Because of severe weather during the winter, an underdeveloped road system, and the nature of economic exchange in the region, trade activities follow certain patterns and cycles.<sup>90</sup> Trade in the rural areas involves essential commodities such as flour, sugar, soap, cigarettes, drinks, sweets, etc. For most other products people travel to shops and open markets in the towns of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. People tend to purchase their entire winter stock of most commodities during the summer and fall. This process is facilitated by traders from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda who travel to villages with their goods and sell or trade them for agricultural products. In other words, some of the trade is in the form of barter. In addition, small local traders often purchase goods from shops in the district centers, sometimes from as far as Tbilisi, and sell them in their villages. Local trade in the rural areas is virtually nonexistent in the winter because the roads are difficult to use and the locals have no cash on hand.

Most of the agricultural products produced locally are destined for the two main open-air markets in the region – in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. The two markets also attract traders from Georgia and Armenia offering fruits and vegetables (the local climate and soils are not suitable for a variety of produce).

Retail services are very limited in the rural areas. Auto-repairs, hairdressers, shoemakers, and other non-agricultural services are virtually non-existent outside the towns of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda.

In the 2000s, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a grant to two microfinance banks offering micro-loans to small entrepreneurs in Javakheti. However, the program got off to a very slow start as the two banks did not understand the local culture. People were inexperienced with credit, very private about their personal financial situation and unwilling to make long-term financial commitments with outsiders. Later, the banks took the innovative step of hiring local “village counselors,” leaders to act as the banks’ representatives as a way to build trust with potential clients. Given that these counselors had existing relationships within the villages, the local population gave the advice of these individuals more credence than that of loan officers from the outside. As a consequence, the demand for loans increased dramatically, while the rate of repayment reached near 100 percent.<sup>91</sup> This is a good illustration of the concept of holism – the idea that all aspects of socio-cultural life are interconnected. The banks were able to address an economic aspect of the local culture by addressing one of its social aspects.<sup>92</sup>

## **Social Structure**

### ***Ethnic Identity***

Javakheti Armenians choose to live compactly together as a way to strengthen their cultural heritage and Armenian identity. They fear that living in mixed communities will lead to their loss of identity and assimilation into the Georgian ethnicity.<sup>93</sup> In fact Javakheti Armenians do not consider Tbilisi Armenians and other ethnic Armenians living in mixed communities to be real Armenians. Speaking a language other than Armenian is seen as a sign of lost Armenian identity. Although many Javakheti Armenians have a sense of belonging to the place they live, they also tend to affiliate themselves with Armenia and Russia, rather than with Georgia. Many ethnic Georgians living in Javakheti describe a feeling of living abroad, in Armenia rather than in Georgia.<sup>94</sup>

Javakheti Armenians’ strength of ethnic identification and their lack of knowledge of the Georgian language affect their status in the eyes of ethnic Georgians. Ethnic Georgians position Tbilisi Armenians higher on a society’s power axis than Javakheti Armenians.<sup>95</sup>

Along with language, another element of Armenians’ ethnic identity is the memory of what Armenians consider to be genocide against them at the hands of the Ottoman authorities during WWI and its aftermath. Javakheti Armenians’ memories of the event are even more intense as they are direct descendants of the Armenians who survived the events and were pushed out of the Ottoman Empire. Javakheti is also on the border with Turkey and the close presence of the state held responsible for the greatest tragedy in the Armenians’ history is easily capable of mobilizing the population for action.

In early 2005 the Georgian parliament passed a resolution demanding an immediate withdrawal of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki. This act alarmed Javakheti Armenians as the base was seen not

only as an economic pillar in the region but also as the ultimate guarantee against potential Turkish aggression. A newly established political organization, United Javakhk, was able to quickly mobilize the local population to hold mass demonstrations against the base's closure. Russian presence in the region was presented as the guarantee for continuing the Armenian presence in Javakheti.

An important element of Armenians' identity is their adherence to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenians are proud to be among the earliest people to adopt Christianity and frequently point out that Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt it as a state religion.

Until 2011, the Georgian diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church had no official status in Georgia, which was a source of resentment among Javakheti Armenians.<sup>96</sup> In 2011, however, over the objections of the Georgian Orthodox Church, the government of Georgia passed a law which facilitated the granting of an official status to the Georgian diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>97</sup>

### ***Social Status***

Javakheti Armenians are ambivalent about the disintegration of the Soviet Union as it affected their status. While during Soviet times they had equal access to political, economic, and social resources as any other ethnic group, after Georgia's independence, Armenians became a minority. The Javakheti Armenians quickly began to see themselves as discriminated against by the new Georgian majority. They suspect the authorities of intending, at best, to assimilate them culturally, at worst, to force them out of the country or make them second-class citizens. For their part, the Georgian authorities, and the majority Georgians do not trust the minority, suspecting them of separatist tendencies and lack of loyalty to the Georgian state.<sup>98</sup>

Javakheti Armenians' self-perception as a disadvantaged and discriminated against community is reinforced by a prevailing sense among ethnic Georgians that they are the country's "hosts" (or owners) and all other ethnic groups are "guests," and that hosts and guests should act accordingly. Ethnic Georgians see relations with ethnic minorities according to an ethnic "hierarchy," which allows for positive attitudes toward other ethnic groups as long as they remain within a prescribed social status. In this hierarchy, ethnic Georgians are at the top, and all other minorities occupy various other positions below.<sup>99</sup>

Lack of knowledge of the Georgian language, limited political representation in Tbilisi, sometimes hostile attitudes by ethnic Georgians, and very limited state resources allocated to Armenian cultural and educational institutions make Javakheti Armenians feel as second-class citizens in the country.

### ***Family***

Javakheti Armenians place an extremely high value on family. One survey in the region found that people rank health, family, and house the most important aspects of life.<sup>100</sup> The majority of families are extended, comprised of several generations. Traditionally, after marriage, daughters leave the house and move to their new husband's parental house. While birth rates in Georgia have tended to decline since independence, families in Javakheti continue to be large. Due to economic difficulties, the number of marriages is in decline, but divorce continues to be very rare in the region. Both men and women tend to marry in their early 20s.

It must be pointed out that although the society is traditional on matters of family, people are surprisingly united in their preference for love as a basis for marriage – the vast majority (78 percent according to one survey) thinks that marriage by love is happier than marriage arranged by parents. (7 percent).<sup>101</sup> However, when asked what determined their marriage, only 54 percent responded that they had married based on love, while 23 percent - by arrangement. An overwhelming majority, 90 percent, also believe that parents should jointly make decisions about childrearing.

Javakheti Armenian society remains predominantly patriarchal.<sup>102</sup> Men head the family and are the main decision-makers, while women are responsible for household chores and child rearing. Unlike most other regions in Georgia, the government-run kindergartens and pre-schools in Javakheti are very few. Only a limited number of young children have access to them, thus putting an additional burden on families.

It is common for the most senior member of a family to assume the role of the head, leader, and chief councilor of the extended family. Javakheti Armenians rely on the extended family for emotional and financial backing, as well as child- and elder-care assistance. The importance of maintaining these bonds and obligations are taught and encouraged in the youth. The low rates of drug addiction and criminality can be seen as an indicator of the high level of parental and community control over the youth.

Emigration is forcing a change in the traditional family in Javakheti, including in the roles of its members. Most of the people leaving the region in search of work are young men. This places additional responsibilities on the shoulders of the older and female members of the family. One survey found that in 20 percent of households in Javakheti, women were the main breadwinners.<sup>103</sup> Permanent and seasonal migration also provides families with additional sources of income as migrants are able to send remittances back home.

### *Gender*

The Soviet Union had long-running and partially successful policies of promoting gender equality. These policies in Georgia were especially successful in education and employment. Although women in Javakheti currently continue to have high employment participation and attain educational level equal to that of men, prevailing attitudes clearly assign them to a lower social, economic, and political status.<sup>104</sup> Not surprisingly, families prefer to have boys rather than girls. One survey in the region found that 52 percent of respondents believe that men are better at virtually every job or task, while 40 percent disagreed, and 9 percent had no opinion.<sup>105</sup>

Javakheti Armenians have retained more traditional gender roles than ethnic Georgians in the same region. The attitudes toward gender roles and identities are introduced and reinforced at a very early age. An analysis of school textbooks in Javakheti found that boys are routinely presented therein “as competent, aggressive, patriotic and friendly, although lazy; while girls are depicted as kind, caring but shallow.”<sup>106</sup>

Gender roles affect every aspect of life. Men enjoy more power in public and at home. In the family, women are expected to handle household chores and children, while men are expected to be the main wage earners. By customary laws, the inheritance of house and land is given to men rather than women.

It is also expected that daughters should marry and leave the house, while sons should stay after marriage. Women are also pressured to marry much earlier than men. The overwhelming majority of people expect women to preserve their virginity until marriage, while only a slight majority expects the same from men.<sup>107</sup> In employment, jobs in education and healthcare (in addition to traditional employment in farming) are seen as appropriate for women, while men tend to hold the management positions in these fields.

### *Language*

During Soviet rule, the Russian language was the *lingua franca* in the Soviet Union, including in Georgia. Armenians had no need to speak Georgian, although ethnic Armenians in Tbilisi tended to speak Georgian, in addition to Armenian and Russian. In Javakheti, however, Armenians had limited contact with Georgians and accordingly they tended to speak only Armenian and Russian. Their social status and employment opportunities were not affected by the lack of knowledge of Georgian. After Georgia's independent in 1991, however, Russian lost its status as an official language while Georgian became the only official state language.

The status of the Georgian language in Javakheti became one of the most controversial issues in the region. Very few of the people had and still have a good command of the language. At the same time, knowledge of Georgian became a prerequisite for employment in many state jobs and thus the overwhelming majority in Javakheti couldn't compete for state employment. Public servants elected from the region do not speak Georgian and proceedings in local self-governance bodies are held in Russian.<sup>108</sup>

Javakheti Armenians complain that the Georgian state provides inadequate financial support to Armenian language schools in the region and at the same time imposes restrictions on Armenia's attempt to provide Armenian language textbooks to schools in the region. In addition, the local population is dissatisfied with the fact the teachers of Georgian language in Javakheti are not well qualified and the general quality of instruction is poor.<sup>109</sup>

Poor command of Georgian has not only economic consequences for the population in the region (limited access to jobs) but also social ones. Javakheti Armenians live in an information vacuum as Georgian media finds limited audience in the region. The locals are far better informed about events in Armenia and Russia than in Georgia, as Armenian and Russian news outlets are the only sources of news and information. Even local independent television stations broadcast Armenian and Russian channels. In addition, Armenian media tends to ignore the region. What little it does report about Javakheti is mainly about natural disasters, local protests and tensions, and crime; thus perpetuating negative Georgian stereotypes about the Armenians in the region.

Lack of knowledge of the Georgian language creates the most serious obstacle in the process of Javakheti Armenians' civil integration. It negatively affects their political, economic, and social status in Georgia.

In addition to Javakheti Armenians' concern with the status of the Georgian language, they are also concerned with the status of the Armenian language. While according to the Constitutions and various laws, the Georgian state supports the learning and use of Armenian in the region, Javakheti Armenians complain that authorities provide little financial assistance to Armenian schools and cultural



institutions. While Georgian authorities see this as a matter of scarce state resources, Javakheti Armenians see it as deliberate attempt to undermine Armenian culture and language in the region.

## Political Structure

The political structure in Javakheti experienced dramatic changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union. During Soviet times power was highly hierarchical – authorities in Moscow, and to lesser extent in Tbilisi, made all major decisions, while the local communist elite had lower level authorities and powers. When Georgia declared independence, this system collapsed and authorities in Tbilisi were unable to exercise effective control over Javakheti (Tbilisi was equally powerless in many other regions of the country). Instead, in the early 1990s Javakheti Armenians managed to create a governance system outside Tbilisi's control, based on family and friendships networks, in which ethnic identities played a big role.<sup>110</sup> Local powerbrokers, aided by armed groups, became providers of goods and services to the population, creating patron-client relationships in the process. It must be noted that Georgia has a long history of elite corruption and patronage, organized crime cartels, and rent-seeking. Hence, the post-Soviet political system that emerged in Javakheti was not entirely unfamiliar to the local population.

Rent-seeking is the act of using one's assets and resources to increase one's share of existing wealth without creating new wealth.

After the initial post-independence period marked by civil unrest and extreme political instability, Georgia managed to create a relatively stable system in which political power was highly concentrated in the hands of few. After taking power in the early 1990s, President Shevardnadze ruled the country through formal and informal structures, concentrating power in a highly hierarchical structure. In this early period he made a choice that still defines how Javakheti Armenians participate in Georgia's political system. Instead of confronting various power elites in the country, Shevardnadze decided to co-opt them. He offered informal power elites, including those in Javakheti, formal political positions and an access to the resources of the state, thus creating a patronage network.<sup>111</sup> In other words, Shevardnadze legitimized local power holders in exchange for their loyalty.

This newly established interaction turned into a pattern of mutually beneficial relationships in which local Armenian elites benefited from state resources while state elites in Tbilisi maintained peace and stability in a minority dominated region of the country. This pattern was maintained by subsequent leaders in Tbilisi, long after Shevardnadze was out of power. The pattern is still largely in place today. Armenian elites in Javakheti mobilize the local population to support whichever party is in power, while Tbilisi keeps state resources flowing to local elites. Accordingly, the local voters tend to vote overwhelmingly for whatever political party holds power in Tbilisi. However, local elites, as well as the voters in Javakheti, have no problem switching their loyalties whenever a new leader takes power in Tbilisi.

Unlike in the early 1990s, authorities in Tbilisi today exercise more control over Javakheti, although they still need to take into consideration the interests of local elites.

Local governance in Javakheti is carried out by legislative (Sakrebulo) and executive (Gamageoba) bodies. The local Sakrebulo appoint executives (Gamagebeli). There is also a governor, who is appointed by the president of the republic. The balance of powers and authorities among the various offices is often unclear and constantly shifting depending on the personalities occupying the offices.

In general, however, the formal authorities of the local governing bodies is rather limited as the government in Tbilisi is unwilling to delegate authority and power, including the power of the purse.

The political and economic powers in Javakheti are concentrated in the hands of personal and informal networks, built around a few people.<sup>112</sup> There is no difference between formal and informal political power in the region. The two members of national parliament from the region, members of the Sakrebulo, Gamgeobas, and Gamgebelis, chiefs of police, and administrators are not only part of the formal political structure, but also heads of various sized informal networks including relatives and close personal friends, which have access to political, economic, and social resources. Control and loyalty are maintained through the distribution of goods and services throughout the patronage network. This pattern of governance has undermined bureaucratic institutions. Nevertheless, the region has witnessed some marked improvements in the lives of people, including the construction of road infrastructure and more resources for construction of public facilities.

According to the Operational Culture General lesson, authority does not always equal power. In the case of political structure in Javakheti, however, authority does equal power. The holders of political and administrative offices in the region are also the most powerful individuals. In fact, they happen to be the most influential individuals even before being elected or appointed to these offices. In effect, election or appointment to a political office in Javakheti simply formalizes power which in most cases already existed.

The only time Javakheti Armenians attempted to create political organizations outside the control of authorities in Tbilisi was in the 1990s, when two nationalist groups, Kavakhhk and Virk, campaigned for regional autonomy. However, once authorities in Tbilisi consolidated power, the leaders of the two organizations were either co-opted or marginalized and their activities ceased. Another organization, United Javakhh, operated briefly in the mid-2000s aiming to prevent the closure of the Russian military base; it lost prominence once the base was shut down.

Although the region seems to be integrated in Georgia's political system, there is a great divide between the authorities and the population. Accordingly, there is widespread discontent with the work of the government structure at all levels. Nevertheless, the population's expectations are associated with central authorities, the governor, and local government at the expense of local initiative and self-organizations. This reflects the legacy of Soviet rule when virtually all essential decisions about people's life and the development of the region came from authorities in faraway places, mostly in Moscow, but also in Tbilisi.

There is also a general failure in Javakheti to establish the rule of law. Starting in the mid-2000s, the Georgian state has attempted to implement reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law, including reform of law enforcement agencies, tax collection agencies, etc. As a result everyday corruption, especially at the lower level, declined. These policies have not been universally accepted in Javakheti. Although the local population liked that the harassment by traffic police, custom officials, and low-level bureaucrats declined, they also perceived that many of the policies were aimed specifically at ethnic Armenians. For example, many small business owners have resented the attempts of state authorities to collect taxes and have accused them of targeting ethnic Armenians only.<sup>113</sup> In other words, Javakheti Armenians have tended to interpret the enforcement of rule of law as a discriminatory act committed against them. In addition, like in the rest of Georgia, people in the region

do not trust state authorities. Rather, they are accustomed to corrupt low-level officials who solicit bribes from them.

## **Belief System**

### ***Historical memories***

Javakheti Armenians have beliefs that sometimes puts them at odds with the beliefs of the Georgian majority. One of these beliefs is about memories and history. Javakheti Armenians believe that Javakheti is their land and Armenians have always lived in the region. It is only the interference of outside powers that determined that Javakheti is part of Georgia, instead of Armenia. Georgians, for their part, believe that Javakheti has always been Georgia's, and in fact, it is where their civilization emerged first. School textbooks in Georgia and Armenia reflect this basic disagreement.

Students in Javakheti are exposed to these contradictions as one year they may learn from Armenian textbooks, and the next year from Georgian textbook. For example, eighth-graders read in the Armenian history textbook that in 1918 Javakheti was part of Armenia and became Georgian territory after it was invaded by the Georgian army. The next year, ninth-graders learn from the Georgian history textbook that it was the Georgian army that liberated the region, which has always been Georgian, from Armenian occupation.<sup>114</sup> After become aware of the narrative that the Armenian history textbooks promote, in the mid-2000s the Georgian authorities banned Armenia from providing history textbooks to schools in Javakheti (they allowed the use of Armenian textbooks in all other subjects).

Another historical issue which puts Javakheti Armenians and the Georgian majority at odds is the recognition of what Armenians consider to be genocide against them at the hands of the Ottoman authorities during WWI and its aftermath. While all ethnic Armenians in Georgia would like the state to officially recognize and commemorate the event as a genocide, Tbilisi is reluctant to do so, afraid to antagonize Turkey, a close ally in the region.<sup>115</sup> This issue is not likely to go away as memories of the event as a genocide are an important element of Armenians' identity. This is especially significant for Javakheti Armenians, most of whom are descendants of the Armenians who left the Ottoman Empire to escape prosecution. The local population keeps the memories of the events alive and still considers any development that may empower Turkey in the region as a threat to its existence and identity.

Since 1991, Javakheti Armenians have maintained relatively little interest in Georgia's political life. However, they can be easily mobilized for political action whenever there is a perceived threat to their identity.

### ***Variation in beliefs and behaviors***

The Javakheti Armenians live in a great physical isolation and cultural alienation from the rest of Georgia and Georgian society. These contributed to a consolidation of local identity and beliefs. Javakheti Armenians also display relatively limited variations in beliefs.

What accounts for the relatively limited variations in beliefs among Javakheti Armenians compared to the rest of society in Georgia is the overwhelming rural character of the population, its physical isolation from the rest of the country, its shared history and memories, and its strong ethnic identity.

Since 1991, the society in Javakheti has been experiencing great changes that have affected people's behaviors. For example, economic changes have been forcing individuals to become more self-reliant and less reliant on the state for goods and services. In addition, a significant number of people have moved abroad in search of job and educational opportunities, thus forcing many women and elderly people to take on more economic and social responsibilities. However, there is little evidence yet that these changes in behavior have significantly affected Javakheti Armenians' beliefs.

The concept of holism may help us understand the complexity of change in Javakheti. Georgia's independence ushered not only in a new political and economic system, but also affected social structures and beliefs. For example, after Georgia gained independence, the newly acquired right to travel abroad and the disappearing employment opportunities in Javakheti forced many to seek employment elsewhere. This migration, both permanent and seasonal, challenged the traditional family structure and relationships. On the other hand, existing social structures and beliefs, for their part, left a distinct mark on the newly emerging political and economic system in Javakheti. The existing informal political and economic structures based on ethnic, family and friendship relationships gradually transformed into formal and legitimate political and economic structures.

## **Conclusion**

You might have noticed that the case study does not include all, or even many, of the concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document. This is only natural; a comprehensive body of literature devoted to the study of a single culture is rare. In fact, Marines are frequently called upon to operate in areas where current information on local culture is scarce. What the OCG and the chapters in this document do is help Marines learn about their assigned region and acquire skills and concepts that will assist them in operating effectively in complex cross-cultural situations in any part of the globe when information is scarce or rapidly changing.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> For more on the Montreux Convention see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/naval-arms-control-1936.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> A study found that river density and landscape roughness are correlated with linguistic diversity. That explains why some places in the world have lots of small languages, and others have fewer, bigger languages. For additional information see: Jacob Bock Axelsen and Susanna Manrubia, “River Density and Landscape Roughness Are Universally Determinants of Linguistic Diversity,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, Vol. 281, No. 1784 (June 7, 2014).
- <sup>3</sup> For more detailed information see: The World Bank, *Central Asia and Caucasus Disaster Risk Management Initiative (CAC DRMI): Risk Assessment for Central Asia and Caucasus Desk Study Review* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, no date), 23-36, [http://www.unisdr.org/files/11641\\_CentralAsiaCaucasusDRManagementInit.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/files/11641_CentralAsiaCaucasusDRManagementInit.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> For more details on the history of the region see: Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 89-138; Zoran Pavlovic, *Turkey* (Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 34-53.
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- <sup>6</sup> Coene, *The Caucasus*, 95.
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- <sup>11</sup> Henceforward some graphs include data on the US as a way to gain a proper prospective on the data for the Trans-Caucasus.
- <sup>12</sup> One United Nations’ study estimated that between 700,000 to 1.3 million people emigrated from Armenia between 1991 and 2009. For additional information on this see: Giorgi Lomsadze, “Where Have All the Armenians Gone?” *EurasiaNet* (July 22, 2011), <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63932>; According to a poll conducted in 2013, 40% of Armenians would like to move permanently to another country. For additional information on this see: “Armenia: Forty Percent of Gallup Poll Respondents Want Out,” *EurasiaNet* (April 4, 2013), <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66784>
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- <sup>16</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, “Informal Network in the South Caucasus’s Societies,” *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, No. 50 (May 3, 2013): 2-4, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=164197>
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- <sup>31</sup> Read more about this at: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2015* (Freedom House, 2015), <http://freedomhouse.org>
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- <sup>45</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Turkey," *The World Bank* (2015), accessed March 18, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/turkey>
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- <sup>47</sup> Fadi Hakura, "After the Boom: Risks to the Turkish Economy," *Briefing Paper* (London, UK: Chatham House, August 2013), accessed March 18, 2015, [http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Europe/0813bp\\_turkey.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Europe/0813bp_turkey.pdf)
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